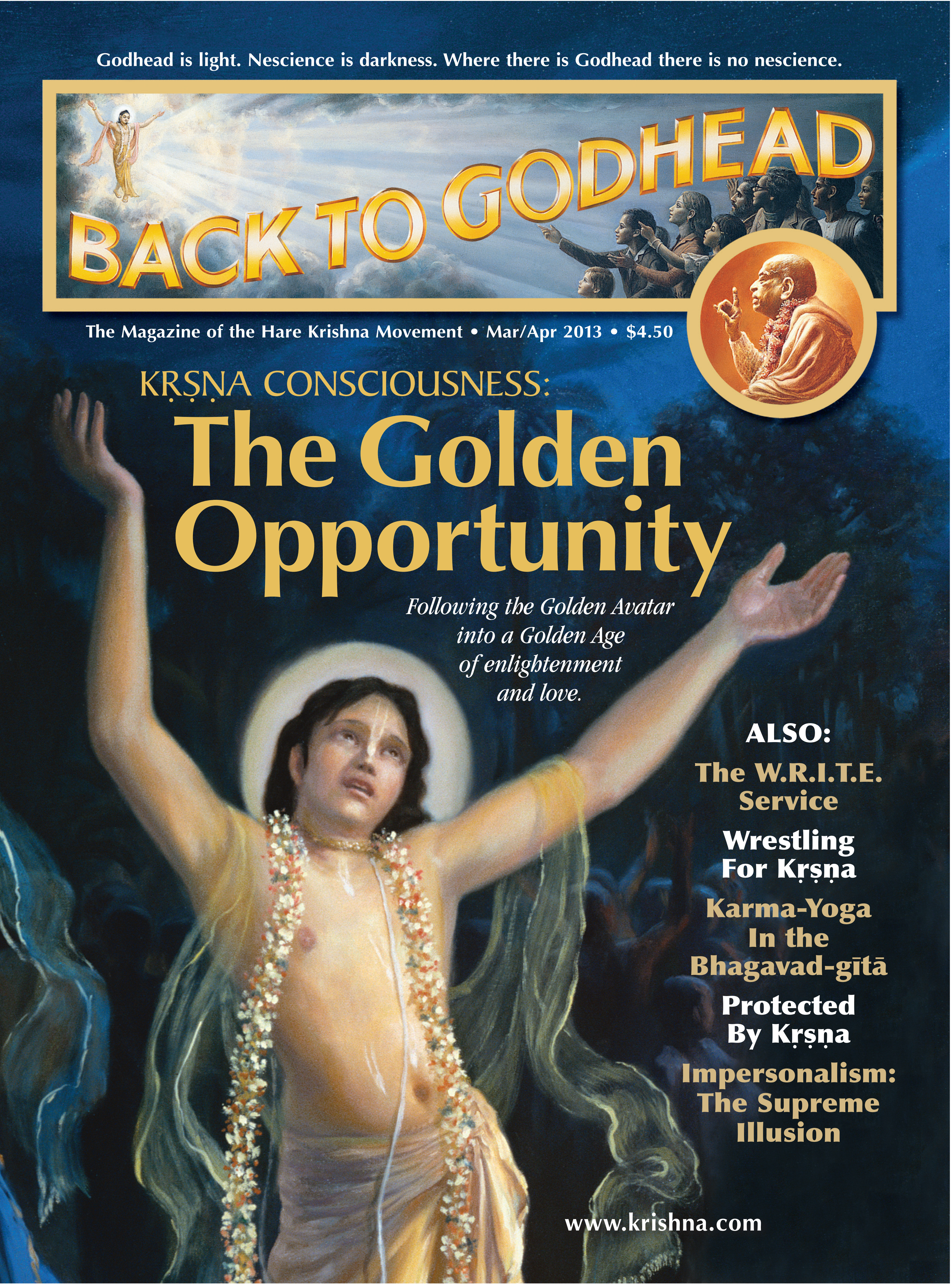

Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

# BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Mar/Apr 2013 • $4.50

## KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS:
## The Golden Opportunity

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*into a Golden Age*
*of enlightenment*
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# BACK to GODH

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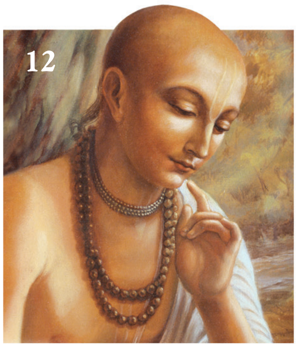
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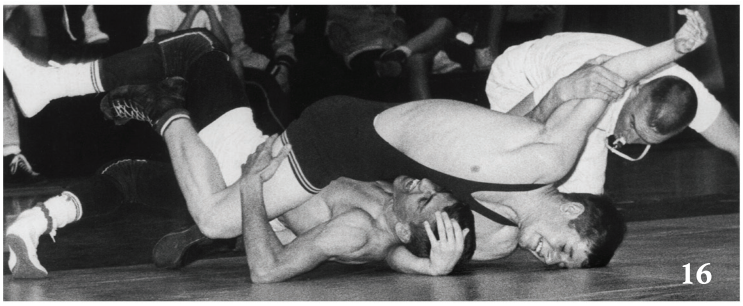
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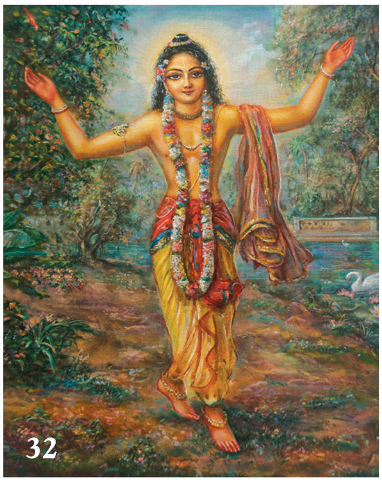

32

46

## FEATURES

**Founder's Lecture**

**6 Protected by Kṛṣṇa**
Prabhupāda explains why the Pāṇḍavas were assured of victory at Kurukshetra despite their inferior army.

**12 The W.R.I.T.E. Service**
Among other benefits, writing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness helps us grasp what we hear and read.

**How I Came to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness**

**16 Wrestling for Kṛṣṇa: A Meditation Teacher's Journey**
Seeming coincidences help foster an awakening interest in Kṛṣṇa.

**Book Excerpt**

**23 Karma-Yoga in the Bhagavad-gītā**
Lord Kṛṣṇa clarifies what seem to Arjuna to be contradictory instructions.

**26 Offering Daṇḍavat: A Nurturing Display of Surrender**
Ultimate spiritual realization entails a loving and willing yielding of our self to the Supreme Whole.

**32 Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Golden Opportunity**
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Golden Avatar, delivered the best process for spiritual perfection for the current age.

**46 Sickness: A Friend and Teacher**
Some spiritual benefits may come more quickly when we face our illnesses with the right attitude and vision.

**50 Relationships Matter**
Loving relationships between Kṛṣṇa's devotees here and now are a valuable contribution to His mission on earth.

# EAD

## DEPARTMENTS

**Letters** 4

**Book Section: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam** 35
*Dhruva Flies to Vaikuṇṭha*

**Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out** 39
*Impersonalism: The Supreme Illusion*

**e-Krishna** 41

**The Vedic Observer** 42
*Delhi Gang-Rape and the Modern Śūrpaṇakhā*

**Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out** 39
*Impersonalism: The Supreme Illusion*

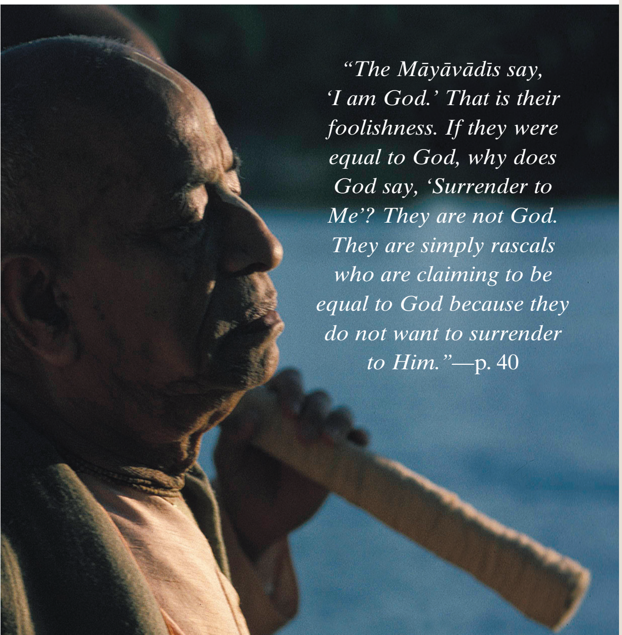
**Centers Around the World** 59

**From the Editor** 62
*By the Light of the Full Moon*

**Krishna.com Store** 63

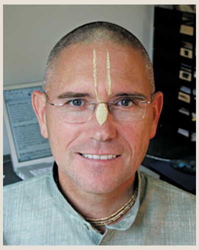
**Vedic Thoughts** 67

COVER About five hundred years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Golden Avatar, and brought with Him the religion for the age: the congregational chanting of the names of God. Please see the article beginning on page 32. (Art: Detail from a painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa)



*"The Māyāvādīs say, 'I am God.' That is their foolishness. If they were equal to God, why does God say, 'Surrender to Me'? They are not God. They are simply rascals who are claiming to be equal to God because they do not want to surrender to Him."*—p. 40

## WELCOME



This issue corresponds with the anniversary of the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared in West Bengal in 1486 CE. As Satyarāja Dāsa writes in "Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Golden Opportunity," Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's most intimate devotee. She is full of love for Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Caitanya delivered the process by which we can come to taste that love.

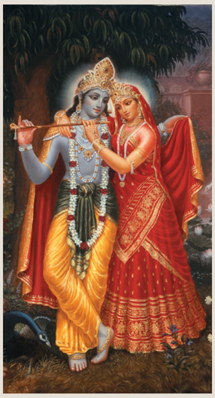
While chanting is the essence of Lord Caitanya's mission, His biographies written by His contemporaries reveal related spiritual practices. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* for example, tells of Caitanya's devotees offering *daṇḍavat*—lying prostrate before God or His representatives. In "Offering Daṇḍavat: A Nurturing Display of Surrender," Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī writes of the spiritual importance of this practice.

Chanting Kṛṣṇa's names is called *kīrtana,* but the word can mean any type of devotional expression, including writing. Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes refer to his books as recorded *kīrtanas.* In "The W.R.I.T.E. Service," Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa encourages us, as Śrīla Prabhupāda did, to write as devotional service to the Lord. My thanks to devotees who produce articles for this magazine and thus heed Prabhupāda's call to write.

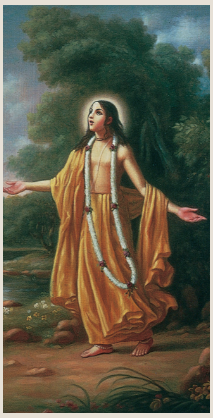
Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*

## OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



*Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.*



*Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.*

*His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.*

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GODHEAD
*The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement*

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# Letters

## Lonely People

Why do people feel lonely despite being Kṛṣṇa conscious?

Parthsarathy
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* "Being Kṛṣṇa conscious" and taking up the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness are two different things. Your question is like asking why someone doesn't practice medicine even though he is in medical school.

Fully Kṛṣṇa conscious persons see Kṛṣṇa in everything, are fully aware of their own spiritual nature, and are attached to rendering loving service to Kṛṣṇa at every moment. Such persons have no separate material concerns for happiness or satisfaction. Rather, they feel that if Kṛṣṇa and their guru are satisfied, then they are also happy.

Taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the beginning of a process. One starts to read about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, discusses it, and practices it with the hope of developing a taste for spiritual activities and realizing his or her relationship with Kṛṣṇa. During the initial stages, we may slip occasionally, may have doubts and weaknesses, and may lack clarity. All these things may make us feel separate from Kṛṣṇa and even from Kṛṣṇa's devotees. Thus loneliness settles in.

When one is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, one realizes that Kṛṣṇa is in the heart and can be accessed anytime. The Lord and the guru are always there, and so one never feels alone. Even in adversity one sees the hand of the Lord and understands deeply that the Lord is always present.

## Increasing Determination And Tolerance

Please tell me how to increase my determination to follow the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Also, I want to know how to increase tolerance.

Rohit
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* There are several things you can do to increase your determination on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Number one is association. By taking regular association from those who are strong, determined, and dedicated to the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you will find that your determination increases. And if by chance you become weak, then there will always be others to assist you by offering strong support.

The second thing is to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books daily. In his purports Śrīla Prabhupāda always took the time to offer detailed instructions applicable to us. He taught us how to overcome the obstacles we face, and by reading his books we will become stronger and more determined.

Studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's life and seeing his determination will also help. Read *Śrīla Prabhupāda Līlāmṛta* or other books written about him by his close disciples. You will be amazed and strengthened by hearing of his determination.

Eat only *prasādam.* We become weak by eating food not prepared for and offered to Kṛṣṇa. If we eat only *prasādam,* we become inspired and stronger in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As for increasing our tolerance, the most important thing is to remember that everything happens with Kṛṣṇa's sanction. We are coming in contact with the results of our past activities. We have no choice in that, but how we react to what happens creates our future situation. So to lessen your future difficulties, be tolerant in your present situation, and you will find that the karmic chain will be broken.

Remember, Kṛṣṇa is in control. Be grateful for the lessons He is teaching you. Even if you find those lessons difficult to take, develop an attitude of gratitude, and you will find yourself much more peaceful and appreciative of His intervention in your life.

## The Spiritual World

Will things that one loves to do in earthly life, like art or a particular discipline, exist in Kṛṣṇa's world, or is all lost? Is there activity, or total absorption? What about child-rearing?

Tabitha
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* There is a story in the ancient Vedic texts about two frogs. One was a worldly-wise frog, having traveled far and wide, and the other lived in a village well. The worldly frog went to visit his friend in the well one day and tried to describe the ocean to him. But the frog in the well could only ask, "Is it twice the size of my well? Three times the size of my well?" Each time, he would puff himself up a bit trying to compare the ocean to his well. Finally he exploded. It was not possible for the frog to understand the grandeur of the ocean by looking through the lens of his experience in his small well.

To some extent, trying to understand the spiritual word is like that. Here we are in this material well. People are getting old, dying, and fighting over nothing. Material things deteriorate; cars and houses have to be replaced or repaired regularly. Prices go up, and so we work harder and harder. But we are still unable to get anything that will make us permanently happy, eternally happy. So we find a few things on earth, like art or children, and we wonder if these little bits of joy will be present in the spiritual realm, or do we just sit and stare at God in awe all day.

Actually the spiritual world is full of variety. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has friends, wives, and children, and even lovers. He is busy in loving exchanges with His parents and friends all day. He plays games and tends cows. He runs in the pasture. After playing with His friends in the forest, He shares His lunch with them, His lunch having been prepared with great love by His girlfriends and parents. Everyone is happily engaged. Kṛṣṇa is the center of everything, but there is individuality, and there are personal loving exchanges of all varieties.

Everything in the material world is a perverted reflection of the spiritual world, and there is far more in the spiritual world. So there is no need to worry that "all is lost." Actually, all is found, and everything is eternal. There is no death or old age, and Lord Kṛṣṇa has a personal, loving relationship with every soul.

(*please turn to page 58*)

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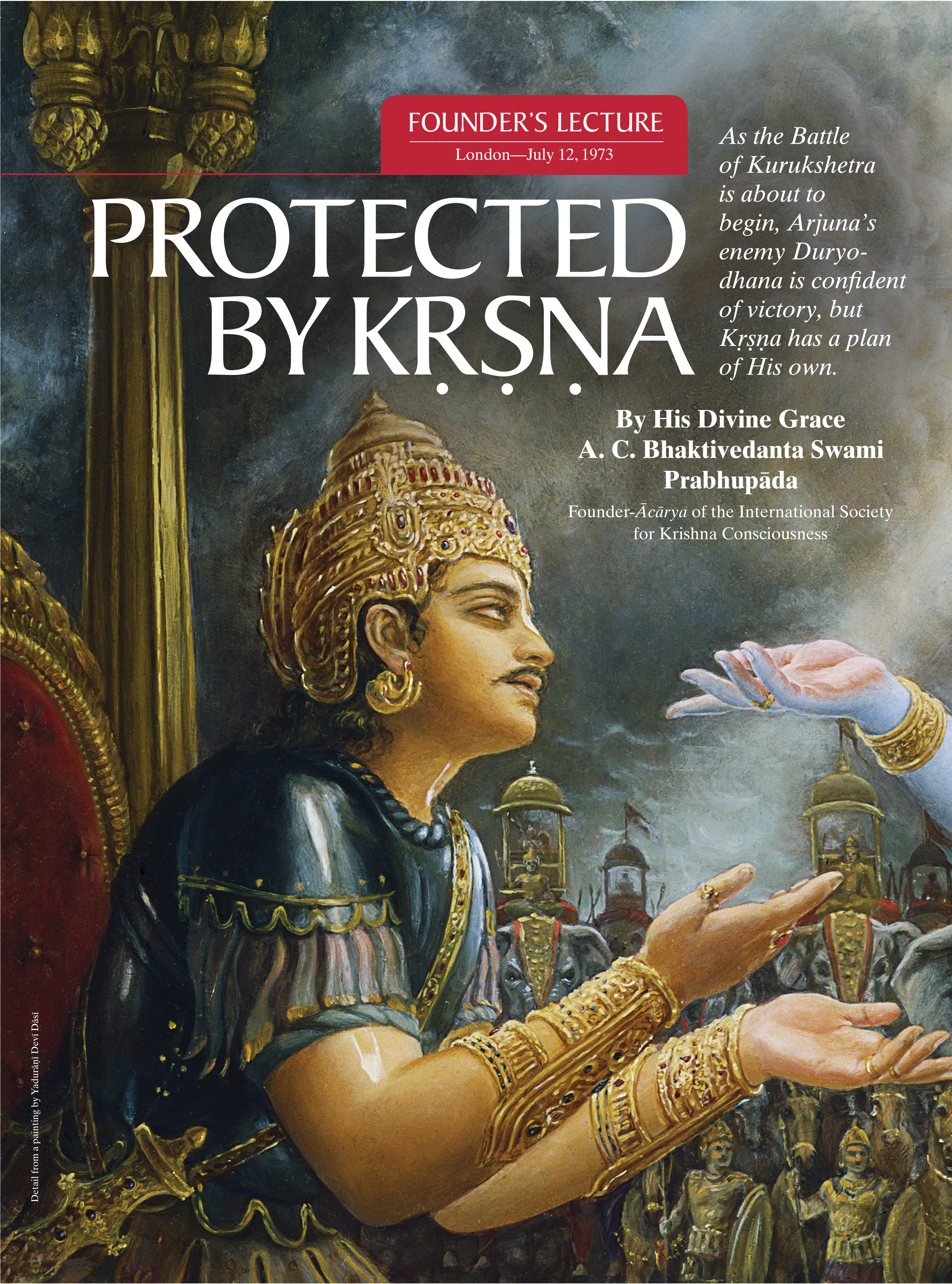

Detail from a painting by Yadurāṇī Devī Dāsī

FOUNDER'S LECTURE

London—July 12, 1973

# PROTECTED BY KṚṢṆA

*As the Battle of Kurukshetra is about to begin, Arjuna's enemy Duryodhana is confident of victory, but Kṛṣṇa has a plan of His own.*

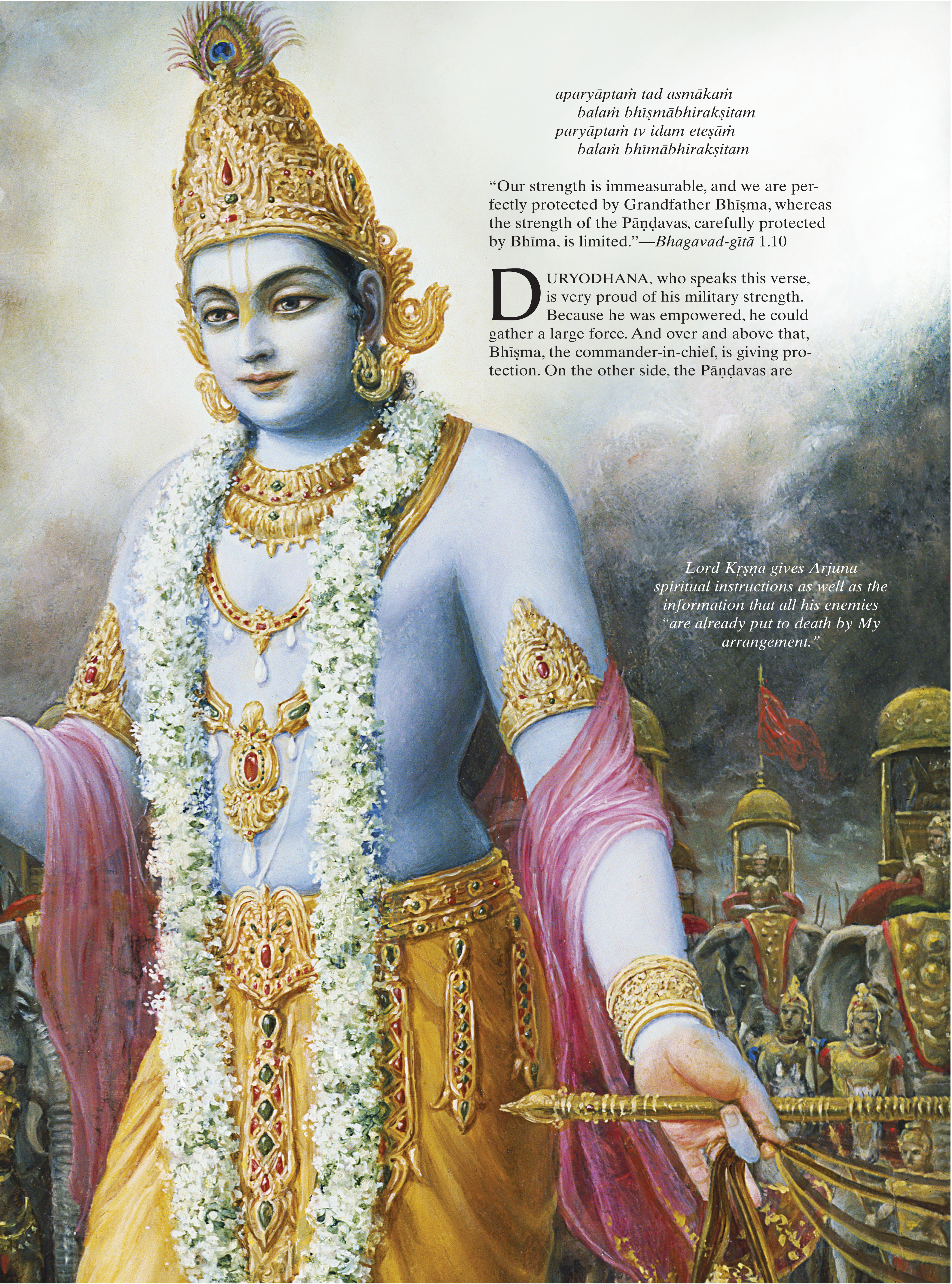
**By His Divine Grace**
**A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami**
**Prabhupāda**

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society
for Krishna Consciousness

*aparyāptaṁ tad asmākaṁ*
*balaṁ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam*
*paryāptaṁ tv idam eteṣāṁ*
*balaṁ bhīmābhirakṣitam*

"Our strength is immeasurable, and we are perfectly protected by Grandfather Bhīṣma, whereas the strength of the Pāṇḍavas, carefully protected by Bhīma, is limited."—*Bhagavad-gītā* 1.10

DURYODHANA, who speaks this verse, is very proud of his military strength. Because he was empowered, he could gather a large force. And over and above that, Bhīṣma, the commander-in-chief, is giving protection. On the other side, the Pāṇḍavas are



*Lord Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna spiritual instructions as well as the information that all his enemies "are already put to death by My arrangement."*

not empowered. Somehow or other they gathered some soldiers from relatives, but their strength is limited in comparison to the other party and is protected by Bhīma, whom Duryodhana always considered a fool. Therefore Duryodhana is very confident. "Our side is protected by Bhīṣma. And the other side is protected by Bhīma. Although Bhīma is very strong, he doesn't have much of a brain." So Duryodhana was very hopeful of victory.

In the previous verse Duryodhana said, *anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā mad-arthe tyakta-jīvitāḥ. Tyakta-jīvitāḥ* means "They have come to lay down their life for me." This is a foretelling, because none of the soldiers on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra would return home. It is already concluded that although Duryodhana is very proud of his military strength because his soldiers are protected by Bhīṣma, they would surely die. This is the conclusion.

**Military strength is required to rule the kingdom but not to misuse for aggression against others' country or kingdom.**

*Nānā-śastra-praharaṇāḥ sarve yuddha-viśāradāḥ* (*Gītā* 1.9). Not a single inexperienced person was there. *Yuddha-viśāradāḥ* means very expert in fighting. Still, they would have to lay down their lives. That was Kṛṣṇa's plan, because these fighting men were not ruling properly according to the tenets of Vedic injunctions. Therefore they were demons. Military strength for self-aggrandizement is demoniac. Military strength is required to rule the kingdom but not to misuse for aggression against others' country or kingdom. That was not allowed.

When Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth there were many kings. Although they were under the rule of the Pāṇḍavas, still they were fighting. That is natural. If one has no Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then his strength and opulence will be misused. And if one is Kṛṣṇa conscious, then he will use his strength and opulence properly. These kings were meant to give protection to the citizens, to train them to the Vedic conception of life. But they were not doing that. Therefore they were demons.

They were *kṣatriyas,* and *kṣatriyas* are meant to represent the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor. *Sarva-loka-maheśvaram* (*Gītā* 5.29). *Sarva-loka* means all the planets, all the universes, and *maheśvaram* means the supreme controller. The universes are created by Kṛṣṇa from His bodily effulgence, *brahma-jyotī.* Just as the sunshine creates these planets, the *brahma-jyotī* creates innumerable universes.

*yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-*
*koṭiṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi vibhūti-bhinnam*
*tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ*
*govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

Lord Brahmā says in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.40), "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose effulgence is the source of the nondifferentiated Brahman mentioned in the *Upaniṣads.* Being differentiated from the infinity of glories of the mundane universe, He appears as the indivisible, infinite, limitless truth."

## The Creator and Proprietor

It is all the creation of Kṛṣṇa. *Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate* (*Gītā* 10.8). Everything has come from Kṛṣṇa's body; therefore He is the proprietor. If I have created something, then I am the proprietor. It is very easy to understand. In the *Vedas* it is said *eko nārāyaṇa āsīt:* "Before the creation there was only Nārāyaṇa." And in the *Bhāgavatam* (2.9.33) it is said, *aham evāsam evāgre:* "Only I existed before the creation."

That does not mean Kṛṣṇa was alone. Kṛṣṇa includes His form, His pastimes, His paraphernalia, His entourage, everything. When we speak of a king, we do not mean the king alone. As soon as we speak of a king, we must understand that it includes the king, the king's kingdom, the king's secretaries, the king's ministers, the king's queen, the king's palace, and so many things. Similarly, when the *Vedas* say, "Before creation there was only Nārāyaṇa," that means Nārāyaṇa with His paraphernalia, His expansions, and so on.

Nārāyaṇa also has expansions in the spiritual world, *vaikuṇṭha jagat*—the innumerable Vaikuṇṭha planets. You have seen the picture on our *Bhāgavatam* cover. Innumerable planets. We have given only twenty-four names, but there are innumerable spiritual planets.

Either in this material world or in the spiritual world, all planets—Vaikuṇṭha planets or *kuṇṭha* planets—come from Kṛṣṇa. Here in the material world there are *kuṇṭha* planets. *Kuṇṭha* means anxiety. Here, any planet you go to, anxiety will be there. That is the nature of the material world. *Sadā samudvigna-dhiyām asad-grahāt* (*Bhāgavatam* 7.5.5). Why anxiety? Because we have accepted something that is *asat,* or temporary; it will not stay. But we are eternal; we want to stay. Our natural position is eternity, so we don't want this temporary body. We try to save the body as much as possible, but it will not be saved. We have accepted something nonsense that is not compatible with our existence.

People in modern civilization do not know this. They think that death is a natural sequence, that it cannot be avoided. No, it can be avoided. But these rascals do not know how to avoid death, although the *Bhagavad-gītā* mentions how you can avoid death. Birth, death, old age, and disease are the problems, but people do not know how to solve these problems. They are simply engaged in some temporary business.

And they are fighting. They are making plans. They are making diplomacy. But they do not touch the real problem, nor do they know how to solve it. But this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can solve it. These rascals may understand this fact—that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not a sentimental so-called religious movement. It is a scientific movement to solve all the problems of life. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

After giving up this body, we have to accept another body. These rascals do not understand this. There are so many defects in the modern civilization. People are full of ignorance, and still they are passing as great scientists, great philosophers, great politicians. Real knowledge they haven't got. So try to give them real knowledge. *Tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ* (*Gītā* 2.13). This is the crucial point. *Dehāntara-prāptiḥ:* one has to accept another body. If you can find a means so that you do not accept another body, then you are safe. Otherwise, as soon as you take another birth, then you must die also. And between birth and death are disease and old age.

## Avoiding Another Body

Kṛṣṇa says *tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti* (*Gītā* 4.9): One can avoid accepting another material body. How? *Janma karma ca me divyaṁ evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ:* Simply try to understand Kṛṣṇa—who Kṛṣṇa is, why Kṛṣṇa appears, why Kṛṣṇa takes part in politics, why Kṛṣṇa engages in so many activities, and so on.

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement means to try to understand Kṛṣṇa. Simply try to understand; you cannot understand Kṛṣṇa fully. That is not possible. Kṛṣṇa is unlimited. But the *Bhagavad-gītā* presents whatever is possible for us to understand. If, as far as we can, we simply understand Kṛṣṇa's transcendental nature, transcendental activities—and we understand them *tattvataḥ:* "in fact"—then we become free from birth, death, old age, and disease. Very easy thing.

Therefore try to understand Kṛṣṇa. How will you understand Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is so great.

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi*
*na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ*
*sevonmukhe hi jihvādau*
*svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

"Material senses cannot appreciate Kṛṣṇa's holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes. When a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and renders service by using his tongue to chant the Lord's holy name and taste the remnants of the Lord's food, the tongue is purified, and one gradually comes to understand who Kṛṣṇa really is." (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.234) You cannot understand Kṛṣṇa with your blunt material senses. That is not possible. You have to purify them. Simply by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, by always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, all your senses will be purified. That is the process. *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau:* And you can begin service with your tongue.

## Service with the Tongue

Now, this is very surprising. By utilizing our tongue we can become perfect. This is unknown to modern science, but this is the process. If with your tongue you chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and with your tongue you taste *prasāda,* you will be perfect, simply by executing these two things. Do not allow the tongue to touch anything not offered to Kṛṣṇa. This is one item. And another item—engage the tongue always in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. You will become perfect. Is it a very difficult task? Anyone can do it. Anyone can chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa

## What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

## Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**geh**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

## Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

*mahā-mantra.* Anyone can take nice *prasāda.* Actually, it is happening so. How are these European and American boys and girls advancing, realizing? Simply by using the tongue to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and take *prasāda.*

You can introduce this process all over the world. Give people a chance to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. But it is difficult also. There was a cartoon. One old lady is requesting her husband, "Chant chant, chant," and the husband is replying, "Can't, can't, can't." [*Laughter*] We are requesting everyone, "Please chant," and they are replying, "Can't." They will not chant. That is the difficulty. Otherwise, we can deliver all the people on this earth back home, back to Godhead, simply by this process: chanting and taking *prasāda.*

The other day we held a festival, Rathayātrā. Chanting and taking *prasāda*—that's all. Organize this all over the world. People will be saved. People will understand Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa will appear. You cannot see Kṛṣṇa. That is not possible. You cannot order Kṛṣṇa, "Please come; I will see You." No. When He is pleased with your service, He will come. "Yes, I am here. See Me."

History has shown this. For example, Dhruva Mahārāja was meditating, and within six months he saw Kṛṣṇa face to face. So everyone can see Kṛṣṇa. Everyone can, provided they utilize the tongue. *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau. Jihvādau* means "beginning with the tongue." We have eyes, ears, touch, and other senses, but begin with the tongue. Try to control the tongue and engage in it Kṛṣṇa's service.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, *śarīra abidyā-jāl, joḍendriya tāhe kāl . . . tā'ra madhye jihwā ati lobhamoy sudurmati:* "The material body and senses are our greatest enemies, and out of all the senses, the tongue is the most formidable." The tongue is *sudurmati:* It has no limit to what it wants to taste. I have seen in Japan. From twenty miles away people are coming to taste some fried birds in the hotel. The hotel has its own bus to bring customers from the city, and they are coming after office hours just to taste some fried jungle birds.

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The tongue is such a formidable enemy that simply for taste people will commit so many sinful activities. They will commit so many abominable actions simply for the tongue. And there is a straight line from the tongue to the belly to the genitals. So if you can control the tongue, the other things will be controlled. Therefore, *tā'ra madhye jihwā ati lobhamoy sudurmati. Lobhamoy:* The tongue is very greedy. And *sudurmati:* It is very difficult to control.

Just see. Simply for the tongue so many slaughterhouses are being maintained. I have seen in the airplane that people are eating a small piece of meat, not very much. But for these small pieces, so many huge slaughterhouses are being maintained. They cannot give up that small piece of meat. The same thing can be made from milk. Prepare cheese and fry it, and you'll get the same taste. Let the animal live, take its milk, and prepare so many milk preparations.

But these rascals will not do that. They will kill simply for the tongue. It is so strong, this tongue. They cannot give up this formidable tongue. The tongue demands, "You must give me meat." So they are obliged. And for this obligation, they are committing so many sinful activities, abominable activities, and becoming bound up by the laws of nature to accept a body within the 8,400,000 species of life, perhaps becoming a worm in stool.

People do not know how the material law is working. *Prakṛti,* nature, is so strong. It is acting very nicely. We have to become very careful. And in this age especially, there is only one way to be careful: If you surrender to Kṛṣṇa, if you become Kṛṣṇa conscious, Kṛṣṇa will take care of you, and you will be saved.

Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

# Glossary

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**Ācārya**—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

**Balarāma**—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

**Battle of Kurukshetra**—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

**Bhagavad-gītā**—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna. (Cited as Bg.)

**Bhakti**—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

**Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura**—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

**Bhakti-yoga**—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

**Caitanya Mahāprabhu**—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

**Darśana**—"viewing," audience with a deity or saintly person.

**Dharma**—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

**Godhead**—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

**Gurukula**—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

**Hare Kṛṣṇa**—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

**ISKCON**—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

**Japa**—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

**Kali-yuga**—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

**Karma**—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

**Kīrtana**—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

**Kṛṣṇa**—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

**Mahābhārata**—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

**Māyā**—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

**Māyāvādī**—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.

**Modes of nature**—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

**Nityānanda**—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

**Prasāda**—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion.

**Purāṇas**—Vedic histories.

**Rādhārāṇī**—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

**Rathayātrā**—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

**Sannyāsa**—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

**Śāstra**—scriptures, especially the Vedic scriptures of India.

**Śrī**—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

**Śrīla Prabhupāda**—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

**Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. (Cited as *Bhāg.*)

**Supersoul**—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

**Vaiṣṇava**—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

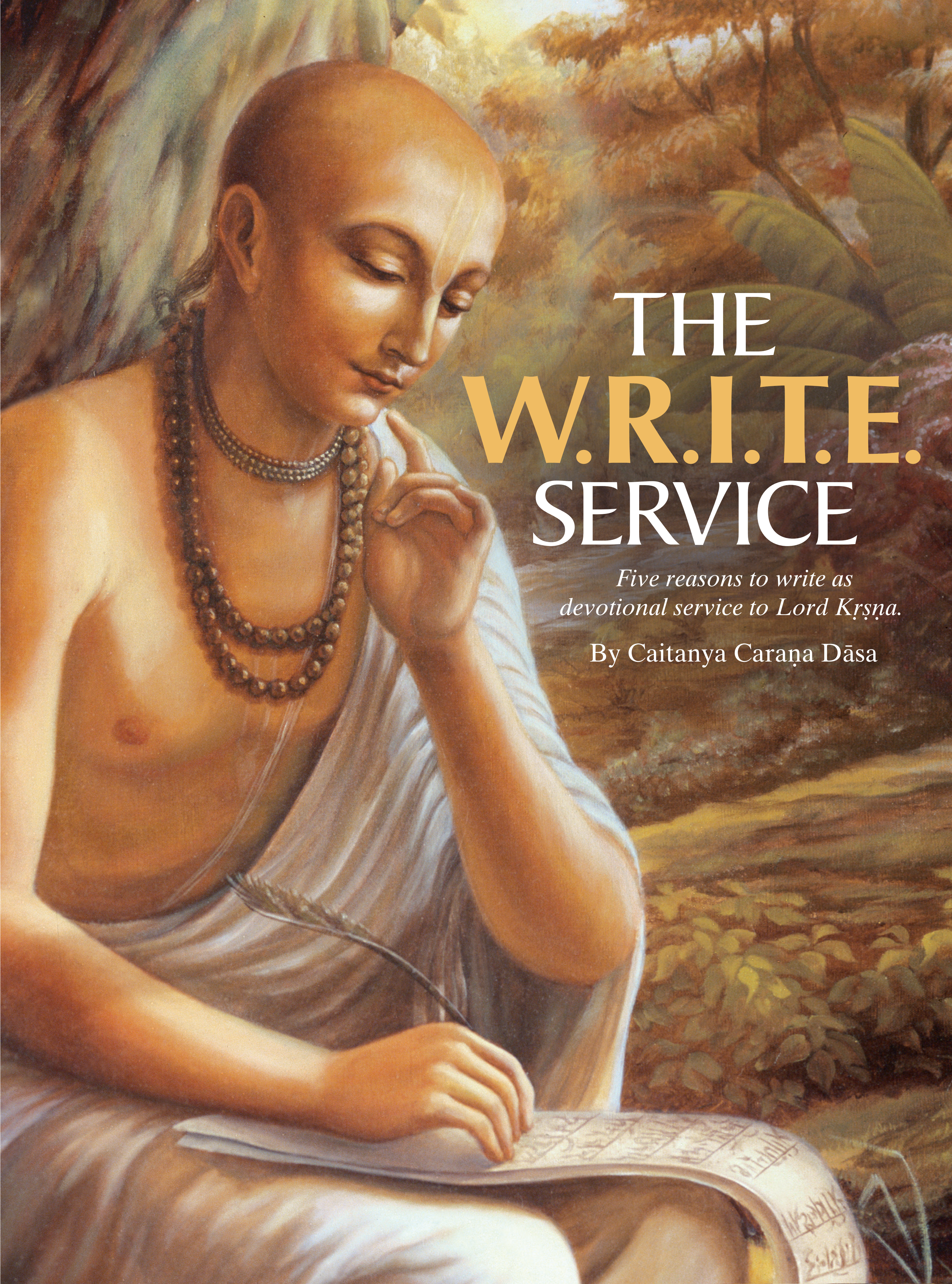
**Varṇāśrama**—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

**Vedas**—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

**Vedic**—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

**Viṣṇu**—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

**Vṛndāvana**—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.



# THE W.R.I.T.E. SERVICE

*Five reasons to write as devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.*

By Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

Detail from a painting by Rāmanātha Dāsa

On the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote many important books explaining the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Realization means you should write. Every one of you. What is your realization? What is this *Back to Godhead* for? You write your realization—what you have realized about Kṛṣṇa. That is required."

(Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lecture, August 14, 1972)

FOR MORE THAN a decade my most important service to Kṛṣṇa has been writing. Over these years, by Kṛṣṇa's mercy I have written eight books, some five hundred articles, and over a hundred thousand words in my personal diary. Since last year, when I started writing a daily three-hundred-word meditation on the *Bhagavad-gītā,* I have been repeatedly asked, "What inspires you to write?" I have no single steady answer. Over the years, as my writing has evolved so has my understanding of what writing does for me and what I can do with it—in particular, how I can use it to serve Kṛṣṇa and go closer to Him.

I can summarize what I presently understand about why I write through an acronym: WRITE. Worship, Realization, Introspection, Therapy, and Explanation. Let me elaborate these five reasons one by one.

## Worship

*Sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya:* "By your prescribed work, worship Him." (*Gītā* 18.46)

For me, writing is first and foremost a way to worship Kṛṣṇa. We may normally associate worship with service to the deity form of Kṛṣṇa, but the *Bhagavad-gītā* broadens our understanding of worship, showing how a spectrum of activities can become forms of worship.

Writers live in words. So naturally words are the means by which devotee writers strive to worship Kṛṣṇa. Just as *pūjārīs* worship Kṛṣṇa in deity form, devotee writers try to worship Kṛṣṇa in the form of His message. Just as *pūjārīs* beautify the deity with choice arrangements of flowers and other decorations, devotee writers try to beautify Kṛṣṇa's message with choice arrangements of words and figures of speech. Of course, both *pūjārīs* and devotee writers know they cannot beautify Kṛṣṇa; He is already perfectly and supremely beautiful. But by endeavoring diligently to beautify Him nevertheless, we render service to Him and thereby become purified.

Additionally, when we try to skillfully beautify Kṛṣṇa, His true beauty becomes manifest even to material vision, at least partially. Most people find it easier to appreciate Kṛṣṇa when His beauty is made evident through a gorgeously dressed deity or when His wisdom is made evident through an exquisitely written text. That's one reason why *pūjārīs* who wish to dress the deity in temples and devotee writers who wish to be published need to have some basic level of training and proficiency. Of course, the other reason to strive for a higher aesthetic standard is that Kṛṣṇa deserves to be offered the best.

*Pūjārīs* experience an intimate connection with Kṛṣṇa not just in seeing or having others see the adorned deity but in the very act of dressing Him. Similarly, writers experience an intimate connection with Kṛṣṇa not just in reading or having others read what they've put on the page but in the very act of writing. Those who rush through the beautification, with flowers or words, miss the emotional richness of the process, a richness that can be relished only by a devoted heart and a concentrated head that come together to offer the very best to Kṛṣṇa.

Of course, just as *pūjārīs* have to finish dressing the deity within a limited time, devotee writers too need to set some time limit for their service to be productive. Like conscientious *pūjārīs,* conscientious devotee writers keep refining their work till the last moment possible. Moreover, like devout *pūjārīs*, devout writers constantly meditate on how they can improve the quality of their service. Both work painstakingly to improve the small details that contribute to the overall beauty and potency of the effect. These painstakingly crafted details may elude the eye of most observers, but one eye doesn't miss even the smallest of details. Knowing that Kṛṣṇa is watching and appreciating the meticulousness of the worship is the private ecstasy of the worshiper.

## Realization

"Never mind—two lines, four lines, but you write your realization." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lecture, August 14, 1972)

Practically realizing the knowledge given in the scriptures is a challenge for all aspiring devotees. Realization essentially means accepting in one's heart the reality of what the scriptures declare to be true. All realizations come by Kṛṣṇa's mercy, and many come as epiphanies, so their arrival may not seem to be in our hands. But we can certainly prepare our inner ground for their arrival by thinking deeply about the scriptural truths we wish to realize. And writing is one of the most compelling ways to force ourselves to think seriously.

**I have found writing a personal diary has helped me repeatedly in locating, isolating, and extirpating unwanted desires.**

For example, let's consider how writing may help us realize the scriptural precept that the material world is a place of misery. If we resolve to write on this precept, we will be able to write clearly, cogently, coherently only after serious, sustained, systematic thinking. This disciplined contemplation will enable us to probe unsentimentally beyond the ubiquitous promises of pleasure that our culture parades before us. We will remember the many incidents from our own life and the lives of those around us that demonstrate how misery can overcome anyone at any time—even the most powerful and well-to-do people, and even in the most successful and joyful moments of their lives. When we thus consciously correlate the scriptural precept with our own experience, this inner correlation will definitely help us in grasping the reality of that precept—that is, in realizing it.

If we believe that we are not skilled writers and that whatever we write is unlikely to become a literary masterpiece, or even a published piece, we may avoid writing. But this belief is not necessarily true; if we try diligently to write for Kṛṣṇa, He can empower us far beyond our capacity. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10), *dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te.* Since a devotee writes in service to the Lord, the Lord from within gives him so much intelligence that he sits down near the Lord and goes on writing books." (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 8.39, Purport)

Even if our writing doesn't get published, the very act of writing involves gathering, processing, organizing, clarifying, and verbalizing our thoughts. All this intellectual focus on a scriptural precept helps us understand it better and thereby takes us closer to realizing it.

The most powerful realization writing has given me is that remembrance of Kṛṣṇa enables one to transcend worldly irritations. Once, I had to finish writing my weekly article while traveling to Mayapur for a series of seminars. During the car journey from Kolkata to Mayapur, I was hungry, the road was bumpy, the weather sultry, and the driver sulky. But once I put my laptop in front of me and got into writing, I scarcely realized how the five hours of the journey passed away. Though different people may be able to forget worldly miseries by absorption in various activities, devotees know that the transcendence attained by absorption in Kṛṣṇa is unique because it comprises a this-worldly glimpse of the eternal, ecstatic absorption that awaits them in the next world.

The two reasons to write discussed till now can help us both externally and internally: externally in sharing our faith with others, and internally in deepening our own faith. The next two reasons—writing for introspection and therapy—focus on helping us internally to enrich our devotion. This enhanced devotion helps us in our outreach too, but I'll now discuss writing a personal journal or diary as a tool to map and aid our spiritual growth. A significant feature of this genre of writing is that it doesn't have to be shared with the world, so it is ideal for those of us who feel that our writing is not worthy of publication. Here, we can cast afar the worries that may otherwise hinder us. All we need to do is express ourselves for ourselves—and, of course, for Kṛṣṇa.

## Introspection

"Unwanted creepers look exactly like the bhakti creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species when they are packed together with the *bhakti* creeper, but in spite of this, the creepers are called *upaśākhā.* A pure devotee can distinguish between the *bhakti* creeper and a mundane creeper, and he is very alert to distinguish them and keep them separate." (*Cc., Madhya* 19.159, Purport)

In this section of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Caitanya Mahāprabhu equates the growth of devotion in the heart with the growth of a creeper in a garden. Just as weeds may grow in the garden and choke the growth of a creeper, nondevotional desires may grow in the heart and choke the growth of devotional desires. We need to watchfully nourish our devotional desires and uproot nondevotional ones.

In trying to be "very alert to distinguish them," as Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs, I have found writing a personal diary an invaluable, even indispensable, tool. It has helped me repeatedly in locating, isolating, and extirpating unwanted desires. Soberingly enough, it has also helped me discover how many more nondevotional desires I still have to get rid of.

How should one write a personal diary? There is no standard format for everyone, or for even one person at all times. I write my diary differently at different times. In deciding what format to use, the main guideline is to always keep in mind the prime reason why personal diaries help: because the relationship between thoughts and words is not one-way, but two-way. We don't just reach for words to express our thoughts; we also reach for our thoughts with words. That is to say, words are not just tools to get our thoughts out; they are also tools to get in to our thoughts. Due to this capacity of words, we can use them in spiritual life to probe inwards—to assess our state of consciousness, purity of purpose, and sincerity of execution.

Let me share an example of words as tools for inner exploration. Sometimes in our spiritual life we may feel a vague sense of unease or doubt but may not be able to pinpoint the problem. If we start writing our feelings and their stimuli—just as we would pour them out to a close devotee friend—we will gradually find their root cause: the tension between the creeper and the weeds, between the congenial and the inimical desires.

This kind of writing may become a form of self-indulgence if we spend too much time wallowing in thoughts about ourselves and our own feelings without seeking devotional insight though our writing. But then, we might become self-indulgent while confiding to a friend too. And writing has an inbuilt safeguard against self-indulgent rambling: It is quite a bit of work to write anything using a pen and paper or even a computer keyboard. Consequently, we are less likely to ramble while writing in a diary. Nonetheless, it is important to evaluate periodically whether our writing a personal diary is helping us in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The deciding principle should be *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam:* Accept whatever is favorable for our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and reject whatever is unfavorable. (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 11.676)

Introverted devotees who find it difficult to open their hearts to others are likely to find diary writing enlivening and even empowering. But one important caution is that diary writing should not become a substitute for real friendships with living, loving devotees; those friendships are irreplaceable. Still, given the demanding schedules of modern life, our friends may not always be available when we need them. At those times our diary can act as a friend to whom we can unburden our heart. In my spiritual life I have found that diary writing not only supplements but also complements my real-life friendships. When I have introspected through diary writing, my subsequent exchanges with friends have been more substantial, meaningful, and fulfilling.

## Therapy

"Constant thought of the Lord is the antiseptic method for keeping oneself free from the infectious contamination of the material qualities." (*Bhāgavatam* 3.1.32, Purport)

In writing for introspection, the focus is on identifying the problem. But in writing for therapy, the focus is on finding and applying the solution. The internal problems we face include becoming lusty or greedy or angry or haughty or touchy or weary or gloomy or lazy. At such times, we have to struggle to come out of the emotional quicksand that threatens to swallow us. We somehow fight our way out by chanting or praying or seeking counsel or studying scripture

(*please turn to page 58*)

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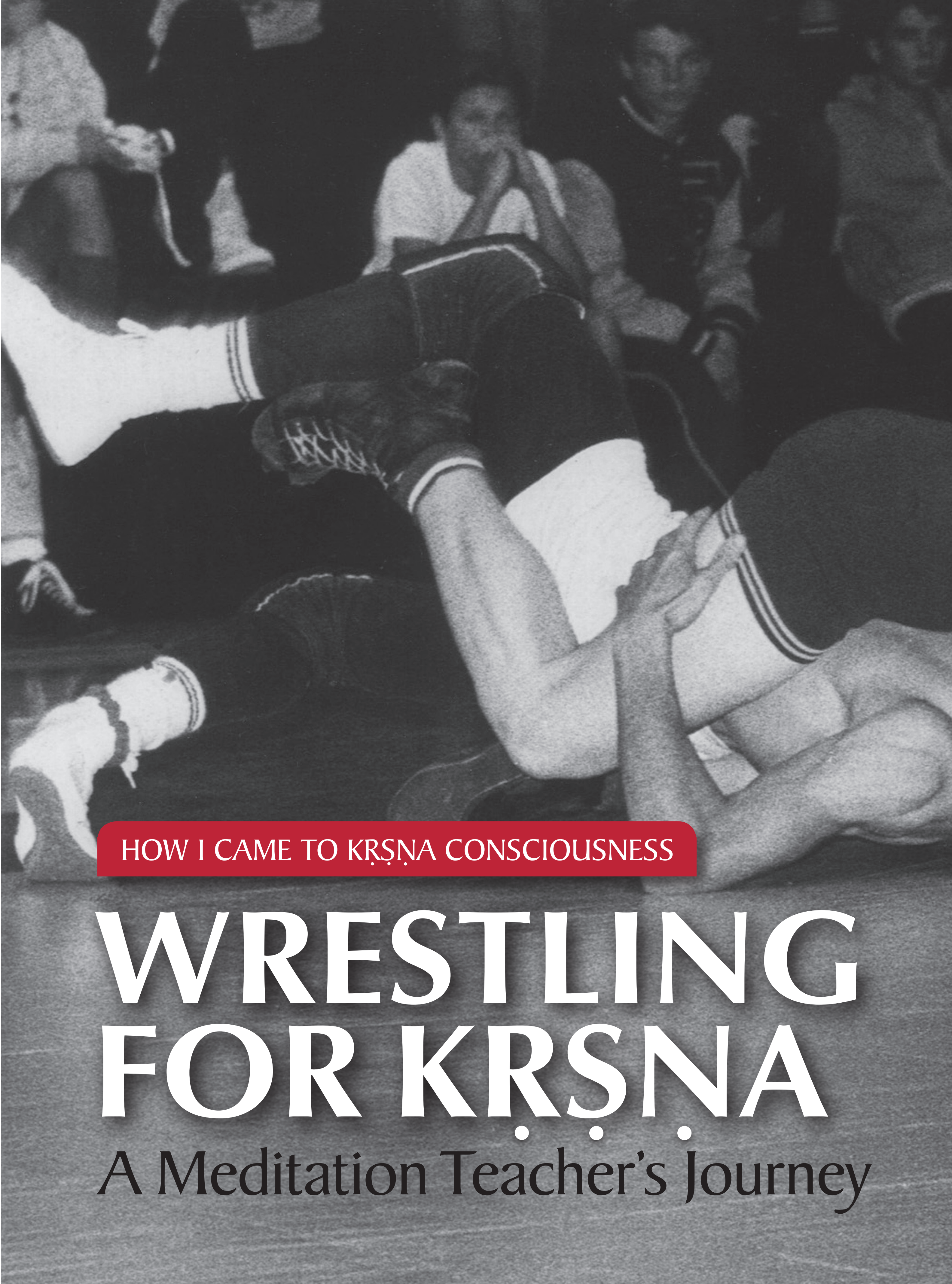
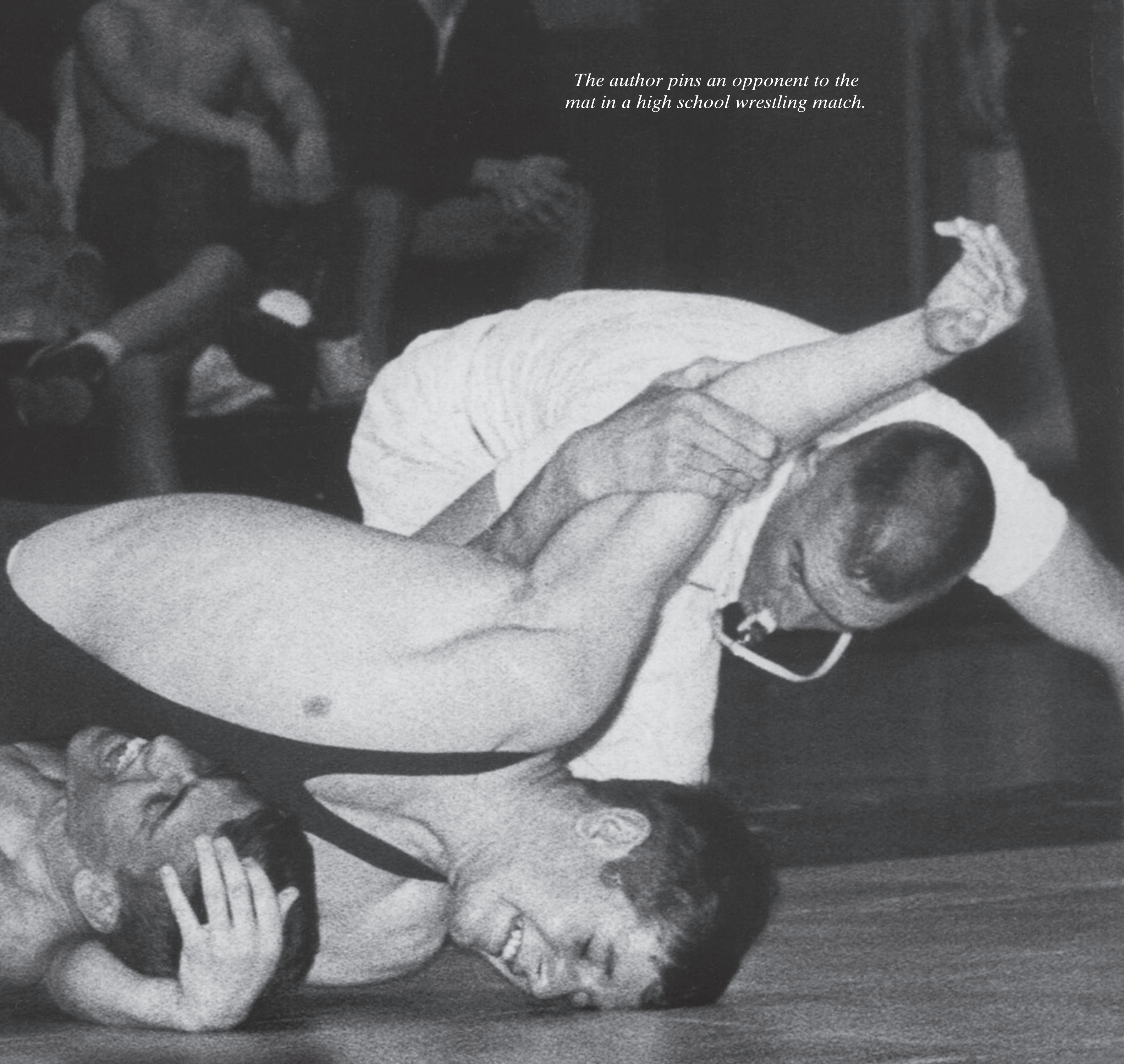


HOW I CAME TO KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

# WRESTLING FOR KṚṢṆA

## A Meditation Teacher's Journey



*The author pins an opponent to the mat in a high school wrestling match.*

## *How inspiration to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa came from two unlikely sources: an interest in wrestling, and words from the founder of Transcendental Meditation.*

### By Sārvabhauma Dāsa

AS A STUDENT, I competed in the sport of wrestling for eight years, from 1963 to 1971, but happiness eluded me. In high school, even when I won the California Interscholastic Federation championship at 123 pounds, I felt strangely empty inside. At the University of California at Berkeley, wrestling was a diversion, but I couldn't forget the Vietnam War and the countless problems that hung over my generation.

Seeking inner peace and satisfaction, I learned meditation while in college. After graduation I trained to be a teacher of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and taught it for a few years. One day at a meditation retreat in Murren, Switzerland, five thousand feet high in the Alps, I saw a two-volume, cloth-bound translation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* published by the Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India. Curious, I opened one of the books somewhere in the middle and read. A wrestler named Cāṇūra was addressing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

> O son of Nanda, O Rāma, You two are well respected by courageous men and are both skillful at wrestling. Having heard of Your prowess, the King [Kaṁsa] has called You here, wanting to see for himself. . . . It is well known that cowherd boys are always joyful as they tend their calves, and that the boys playfully wrestle with each other while grazing their animals in the various forests.
> —*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.43.32, 34 (BBT translation)

Since I identified myself as a wrestler, chancing upon this particular passage about Lord Kṛṣṇa's affection for wrestling—my first experience of the *Bhāgavatam*—was a real coincidence. Previously God had seemed distant or unreachable, but now at the retreat visions of wrestling with Kṛṣṇa sometimes appeared in my meditations. Imaginary or real, these encounters were ecstatic, altogether different from grappling with ordinary human beings.

At the retreat's conclusion I passed through the Swiss resort town of Interlaken, where Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, TM's founder, was giving a lecture.

When I entered the hall, the bearded Indian teacher declared, "The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] is the topmost Vedic literature."

I left Switzerland and moved into a meditation center in Marin County, northern California, but my enthusiasm to teach meditation was waning.

Then I thought, *Why not read the book Maharishi praised?*

It was late summer, and I camped out on a friend's wooded land in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains. After about a month, when I completed the *Bhāgavatam* I began to understand that real perfection lies in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, not *siddhis (*mystic powers), fame, materialistic religiosity, sense enjoyment, or even liberation.

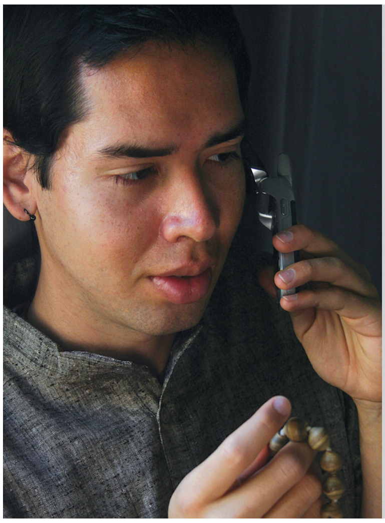
## Connecting with Kṛṣṇa in L.A.

A dental problem sent me to Los Angeles to earn money to fix my teeth. Jack Fernandez, my high school wrestling coach and an important mentor in my life, gifted me a copy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is,* which he had bought from a devotee at the L.A. airport. At the same airport, I saw devotees selling *Bhāgavatam* volumes published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Attracted by the spiritual artwork, I bought several books, and a devotee invited me to the temple. When the TM movement started a TV station not far from the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple on Watseka Avenue, I served as a cameraman and delivery driver. Whenever an errand took me near the temple, I would try to see the beautiful deities, Śrī Śrī Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhīśa, and often received *mahā-prasāda* sweets.

One day, shortly after the dentist treating me had given me a temporary filling, I got a severe toothache. I tried to meditate, but the pain was too intense. I was miserable. I decided to go to the temple. When I arrived, a devotee was singing *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. Somehow, in the middle of the chanting, the pain in my jaw faded. I experienced both relief and bliss. Whatever the truth might be, at that moment it seemed that Kṛṣṇa was giving me a sign that He would protect me if I surrendered to Him. Later I read in the *Bhāgavatam* (2.1.5): "O descendant of King Bharata, one who desires to be free from all miseries must hear about, glorify, and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul, the controller and the savior from all miseries." But, ironically, this positive experience made me fearful of visiting the temple again. If I didn't stop visiting the temple and repeatedly experiencing the ever-increasing charm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I feared I would surely become a devotee. I didn't feel ready for that.

In retrospect, I see that I was in the throes of the ultimate wrestling match, the one at the threshold of devotional life. Pitted against the invincible reality of Kṛṣṇa's all-attractive personality was my false ego's illusory notion of autonomy. Inwardly, I wrestled. Outwardly, I fled.

Then the TM movement announced a special World Peace Project from October to December 1978. Meditation teams would be sent free-of-charge to international hot spots undergoing civil wars or unrest, such as Lebanon, Iran, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), El Salvador, and Nicaragua. We were to check into a hotel and do long meditation ses-



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sions to try to reduce the tension and violence in the atmosphere. Wanting to get out of Los Angeles (to avoid the devotees and the temple), I immediately volunteered, surprising my friends at the station.

My volunteer group, consisting of fifty male meditation teachers, assembled in Miami to board a flight for El Salvador. At the airport a young woman was distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Unable to resist, I bought a small book, while several of the TM teachers, dressed smartly in shirts and ties, looked on disapprovingly. At that moment I suspected I might have more in common with that humble devotee than with the fifty men, but I pushed the thought away.

In San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, we were advised to stay inside our hotel rooms because it wasn't safe outside. After two months, however, just before we were to leave the country, I heard a distant "*ching-ching-ching*." Following the faint sound to a park, I saw hundreds of people standing transfixed as a small group of Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees chanted with fearless devotion. Here I was, trying to avoid Kṛṣṇa, but His devotees seemed to be everywhere.

## Kuntī's Prayer

When I returned to America in December, in the middle of winter, I helped out at a TM printing press in upstate New York. I had read a noble prayer by Queen Kuntī: "Let there be calamities, O Lord, because they force me to seek your shelter." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.25, paraphrased) Unlike Kuntī, I didn't have the courage to welcome trouble, but for some reason I memorized the Sanskrit prayer. One day, singing the prayer while carrying photographic materials over some ice, I fell hard and developed internal bleeding.

The press director said, "You have to leave; we can't provide medical care for you here."

Soon I was soaring above the clouds on a plane bound for Los Angeles, wondering if Lord Kṛṣṇa had allowed this "calamity" to somehow bring me closer to Him. I visited the L.A. temple, but had a difference of opinion and had to leave. I was discouraged, but by Kṛṣṇa's grace the devotee I'd met in Miami began to mail me a new issue of *Back to Godhead* magazine each month. It was a wonderful connection to Kṛṣṇa. Knowing that I was into meditation, one month, along with the magazine, she included an audiotape from the Dallas tape ministry of a senior devotee, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami. He was speaking to two TM teachers in Texas. (She didn't know I was into TM specifically, so her sending me this tape was another "coincidence.")

> **Pitted against the invincible reality of Kṛṣṇa's all-attractive personality was my false ego's illlusory notion of autonomy.**

I was attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness but continued to serve in the TM movement. When I taught meditation, a student would sometimes ask about God. We were instructed to say, "TM is not a religion; it's just a mental technique," but my own lack of realization of God made me uncomfortable. I heard that when Maharishi first came to America, he spoke about God, but he was advised that more people would accept meditation if it was not presented in religious terms. By the time I got involved in TM, he spoke mainly in secular, scientific language, often referring to physics and quantum mechanics, and his *Gītā* translation was limited to just one third of the book—six chapters of Vyāsa's work, not all eighteen. It ended with verse 6.47, where Lord Kṛṣṇa states that the highest yogi "renders transcendental loving service to Me." Although Maharishi praised the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, I never heard him discuss it in detail. His mission seemed to be mainly a secular one.

When I read Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation of the First Canto of the *Bhāgavatam*, I was amazed to find that Vyāsadeva, the illustrious compiler of the *Vedas, the Mahābhārata,* and the *Vedanta-sūtra*, told the sage Nārada, "I am feeling incomplete, though I myself am fully equipped with everything required by the *Vedas.* This may be because I did not specifically point out the devotional service of the Lord, which is dear both to perfect beings and to the infallible Lord." (1.4.30–31) I was also feeling incomplete.

At a gathering of thousands of TM teachers at Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1979, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, speaking on an amplified telephone call from Switzerland, requested that as many volunteers as possible to go to Fairfield, Iowa, to help establish a meditation-based university.

"After this," he added, "you can go back to college or *do whatever you want*."

Maybe I misconstrued his meaning, but as I headed for Iowa, I decided that after helping in Fairfield I would study Kṛṣṇa consciousness at the Dallas Hare Kṛṣṇa temple.

My service in Iowa was to help build a large meditation dome before the frigid Iowa winter hit. One day I had to go high up on a scaffold. Heights scare me, and looking down I realized that a fall could be fatal. Meditation was said to reduce accidents, but the incredible news came that someone working on a similar but smaller meditation dome near Dallas had fallen to his death. That intensified my desire; I prayed to Kṛṣṇa that I would live long enough to serve Him directly in this lifetime.

From Fairfield I wrote a letter to Maharishi in Switzerland: When

(*please turn to page 57*)

# Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma,

PHILADELPHIA RATHA YATRA
KRAMA

*Daytona Beach, Florida, 2012*

Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

**Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare**
**Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare**

PRONUNCIATION:
ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama")
To hear Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting, go to
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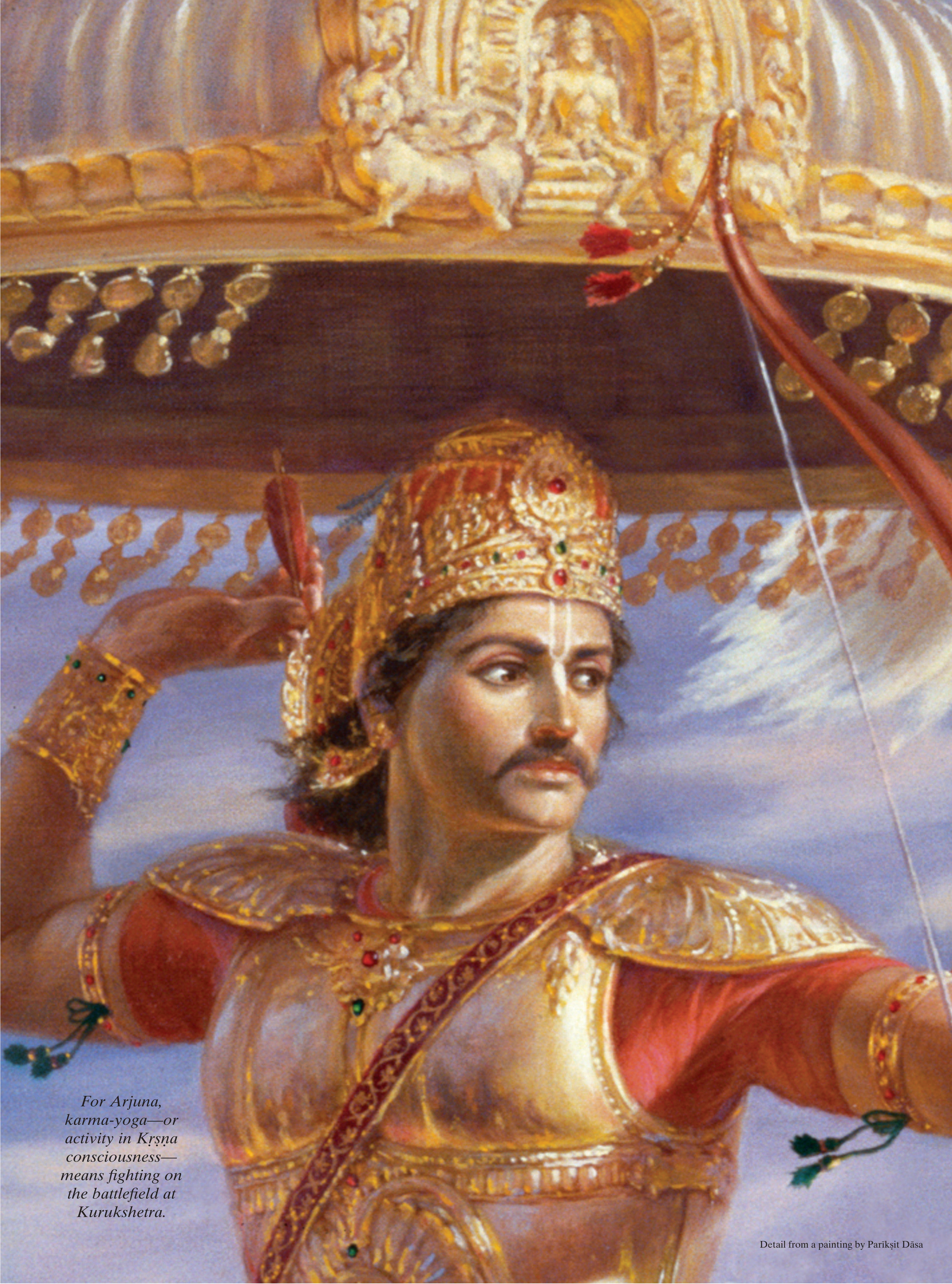

*For Arjuna, karma-yoga—or activity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—means fighting on the battlefield at Kurukshetra.*

Detail from a painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa

BOOK EXCERPT

# KARMA YOGA

## In the Bhagavad-gītā

*After hearing what seem to be contradictory instructions, Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa for clarification.*

### By Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

*In Chapter Three of the* Bhagavad-gītā, *the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, explains karma-yoga to Arjuna. Karma-yoga is work (karma) that's done with God consciousness (yoga). When we work with this attitude—that is, when we're dutiful and unattached to the results of our work and dedicate our work to Kṛṣṇa—we become free from the good and bad results of our acts. In this way (as explained later in the* Gītā*) we gradually come to the point of acting only for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, which is known as* bhakti-yoga, *or pure devotional service on the spiritual platform.*

*In Chapter Three Kṛṣṇa also discusses our desire for sense gratification and how it's the greatest obstacle to our spiritual progress.*

ARJUNA IS CONFUSED. Kṛṣṇa has told him to control his senses and become detached, perhaps indicating that Kṛṣṇa consciousness means inaction. Yet the Lord also said that Arjuna should fight. As a sincere student, Arjuna asks for clarification: "O Kṛṣṇa, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare, if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work?"

One cannot even maintain one's physical body without work. But work done for sense gratification has a reaction, either good or bad, and any reaction binds the performer.

"Therefore, O Arjuna," Kṛṣṇa says, "perform your prescribed duties for My satisfaction, and in

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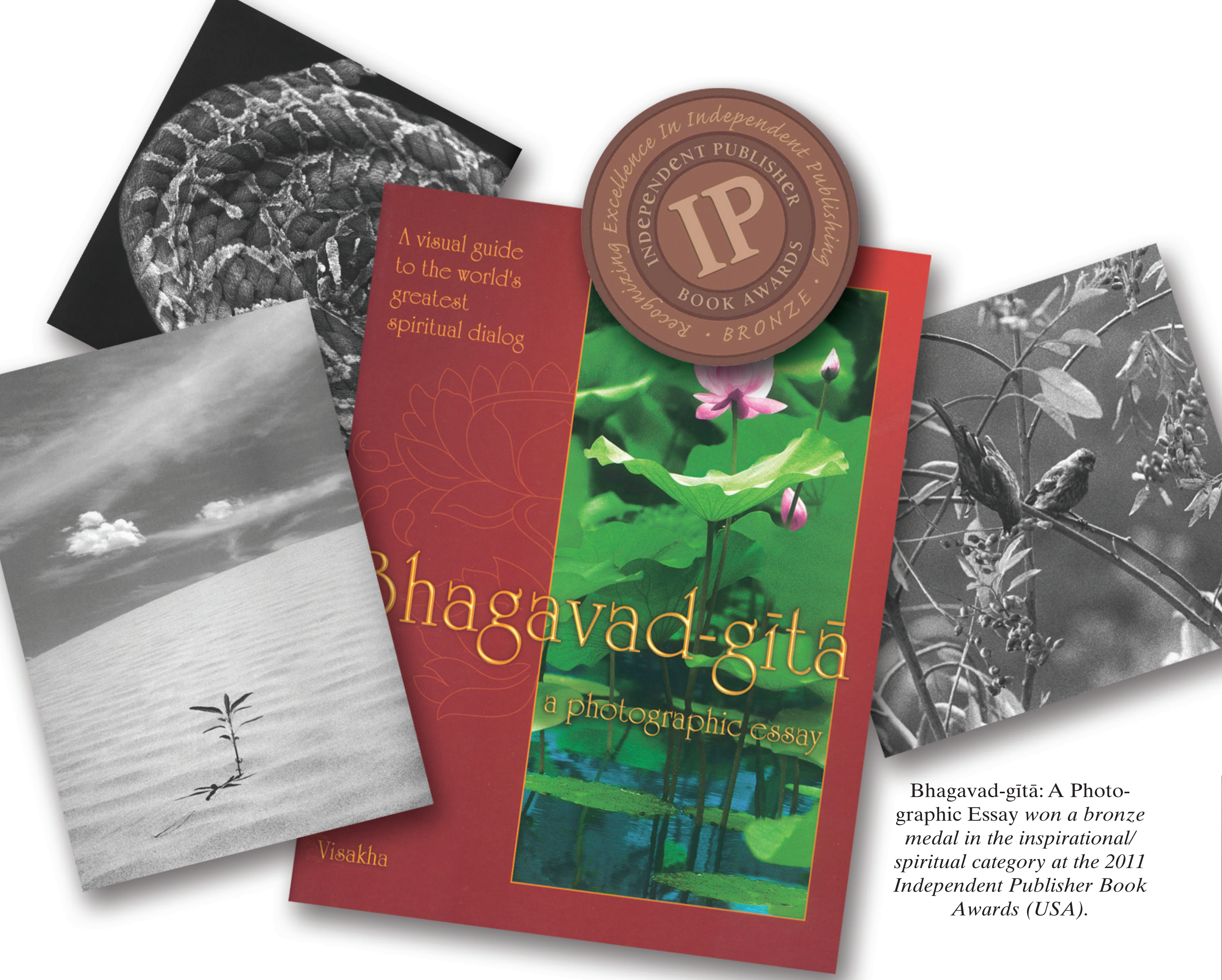
This article was adapted from *Bhagavad-gītā: A Photographic Essay.* The book is a summary study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is,* from which the verse translations and the commentary were drawn, either verbatim or paraphrased, with permission from the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.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Bhagavad-gītā: A Photographic Essay *won a bronze medal in the inspirational/ spiritual category at the 2011 Independent Publisher Book Awards (USA).*

that way always remain free from bondage."

To attain this exalted stage, Arjuna should act as a matter of duty, without being attached to the fruits of his activities; he should fight in the battle for the interest of Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa wants him to fight. Arjuna's idea to be a good or nonviolent man is a personal attachment, but for him to act on behalf of the Supreme is to act without attachment to the result. That is perfect action, recommended by the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, and it is transcendental to all reactions.

"Whatever action a great person performs, common people follow. And whatever standards that person sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

"As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, the learned person may similarly act, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path.

"Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight."

Kṛṣṇa has several times asked Arjuna to be dutiful and detached, but here for the first time He asks Arjuna to fight with devotion. He then describes the result of acting in this way.

"Persons who execute their duties according to My injunctions and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy, become free from the bondage of fruitive actions. But those who, out of envy, disregard these teachings and do not follow them are bereft of all knowledge, befooled, and ruined in their endeavors for perfection."

The simple qualification of firm faith in the eternal injunctions of the Lord, even by a beginner who's unable to execute such injunctions, qualifies one to become liberated from karma. In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely, without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, one will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa

doesn't want Arjuna to give up his duties abruptly, but to remain in his position and try to become God conscious. In this way he will gradually become detached from all kinds of sensual activities.

Arjuna: "O Kṛṣṇa, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?"

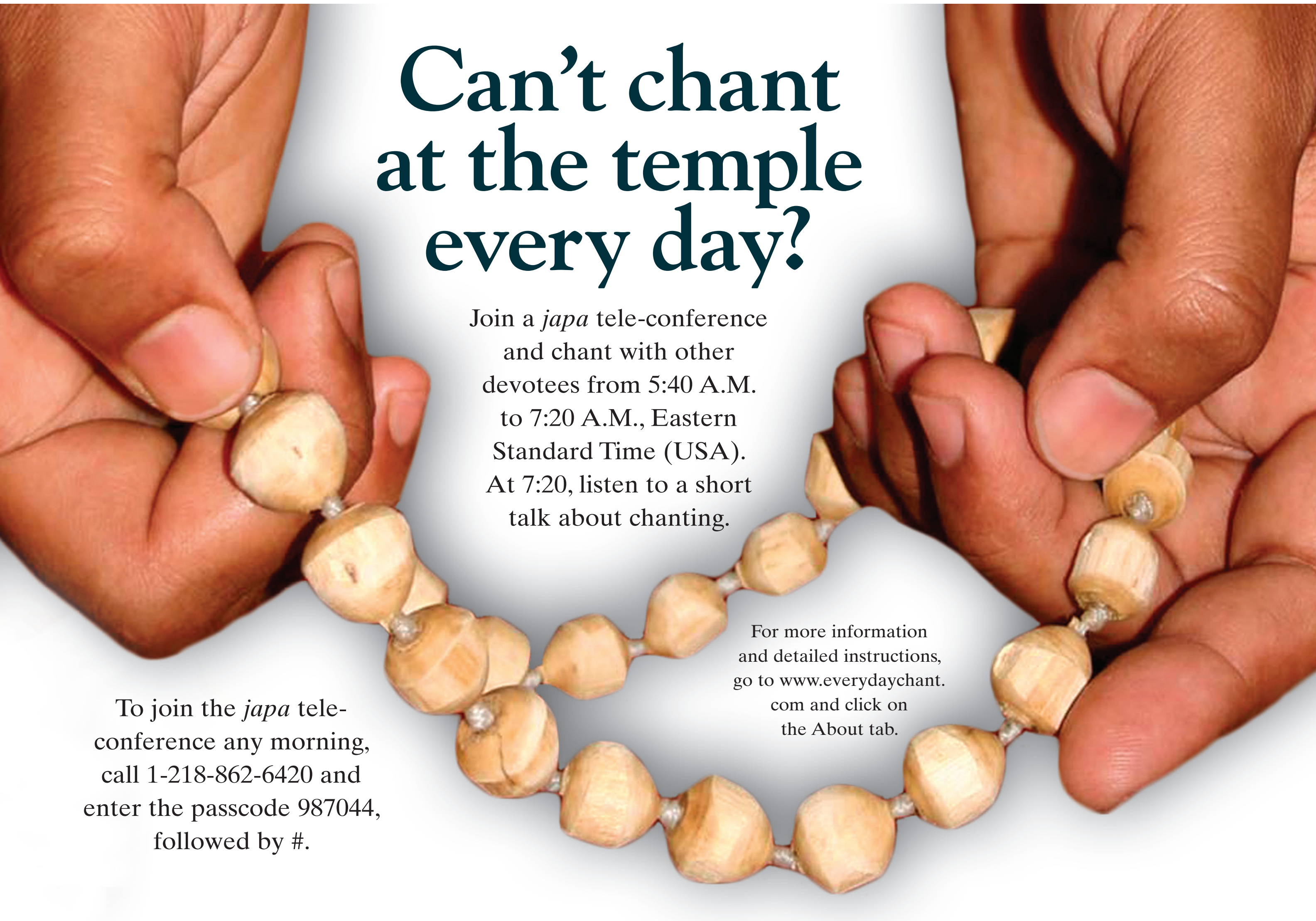
The Supreme Lord: "It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world. The wise living entity's pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire." When living entities come in contact with the material creation, their eternal love for Kṛṣṇa is transformed into lust. When lust is unsatisfied, it turns into wrath; wrath is transformed into illusion, and illusion continues the material existence. Therefore, lust is the greatest enemy of the living entity, and it is lust only that induces the pure living entity to remain entangled in this material world.

"The senses, mind, and intelligence are the sitting places of this lust. Through these, lust covers the real knowledge of the living entities and bewilders them. Therefore, in the very beginning curb this great symbol of sin, lust, by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization." When love of God deteriorates into lust, it's very difficult to return to the normal, God conscious condition; but it is possible by devotional service to the Supreme Lord, in which the soul is directly engaged with the Supreme. Then the soul's subordinates—the intelligence, mind, and senses—will be similarly engaged.

"Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind, and intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence and thus—by spiritual strength—conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust." If lust is transformed into love for the Supreme, or transformed into Kṛṣṇa consciousness—in other words, desiring everything for Kṛṣṇa—then lust can be spiritualized and thus conquered.

In summary, Arjuna's desire for sense gratification is his greatest enemy, but by dedicating his work to Kṛṣṇa (karma-yoga), he could control his senses, mind, and intelligence and thus gradually become transcendentally situated.

*Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been contributing articles and photographs to BTG for almost forty years. She and her husband, Yaduvara Dāsa, have lived at Saranagati Village, a Hare Kṛṣṇa community in British Columbia, Canada, since 1999. For more information, visit her website: http://our-spiritual-journey.com.*



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# Offering Daṇḍavat

## A NURTURING DISPLAY OF SURRENDER

***A simple yet elegant way for each of us to yield to the loving desire of the Supreme Whole.***

**By Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī**

*Bas reliefs on the floor of the Sri Rangam temple in South India show a devoted couple offering* daṇḍavat *before the Lord. Inset: Śrīla Prabhupāda.*

Photo by Gaura Keśava Dāsa

S*URRENDER. SUBMISSION.* Such words may conjure up images of war and aggression, where the weaker party regretfully yields to the stronger, possibly with thoughts of future victory or vengeance. With such images in mind, we may cringe when we read in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that we must surrender to Kṛṣṇa. And our qualms about surrender may increase when we see devotees exemplifying surrender by offering *daṇḍavat,* or lying prostrate in submission before the Lord. But when watered with examples from the sacred literature, the hard green bud of our reservations about submission can open to reveal a soft, fragrant, enchanting rose of exaltation in the deeply satisfying spiritual practice of offering *daṇḍavat.* One Sanskrit word Śrīla Prabhupāda translates as "surrender" is *prapadyate,* which literally means "to throw oneself down at someone's feet."

Ultimate spiritual realization entails a loving and willing yielding of our self to the Supreme

Whole, of whom we are an eternal part. This giving of one's self, or surrender, is something like a child's devotion for its mother. In healthy mother-child relationships, children naturally trust that their mother has their best interest in mind.

Surrender to the Supreme Whole is not an abnegation of will but a willful decision to "respond rightly to the dancing of Kṛṣṇa" rather than dance independently, as Prabhupāda writes in *Kṛṣṇa,* Chapter 33. He also says that the whole world is full of Kṛṣṇa's singing. Those souls whose every thought, word, and action is like a song and dance in harmony with Kṛṣṇa achieve ultimate surrender and unlimited spiritual bliss. Even materially, harmonious dance performances please the dancers and the audience, each dancer offering individual talent and grace as part of a whole. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa in response to His singing is the pinnacle of *bhakti-yoga,* linking with the Supreme in loving devotion.

There are many ways to demonstrate harmony with Kṛṣṇa, whether as processes to achieve full surrender to Him or as expressions of surrender already achieved. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (11.676) lists six divisions of surrender: "The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection of unfavorable things, the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as one's guardian or master, full self-surrender, and humility." Surrender can also be characterized as involving body, mind, and words, as Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Kṛṣṇa,* Chapter 14: "The best course is to surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead with body, mind, and words and always be engaged in His service." The activities of the surrendered mind can be further categorized: "In order to achieve pure devotional service, [Bhīṣma] wanted to invest all powers of thinking, feeling, and willing entirely in the Supreme Being, Lord Kṛṣṇa." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.32, Purport)

## Demonstration of Surrender

All aspects of surrender can be nourished and demonstrated by the simple yet profound bodily act of offering *daṇḍavat:* lying prone before Kṛṣṇa or His devotees. Prabhupāda explains: "The word *daṇḍa* means rod or pole. A rod or pole falls straight; similarly, when one offers obeisances to his superior with all eight *aṅgas* (parts) of the body, he performs what is called *daṇḍavat.*" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 1.67, Purport).

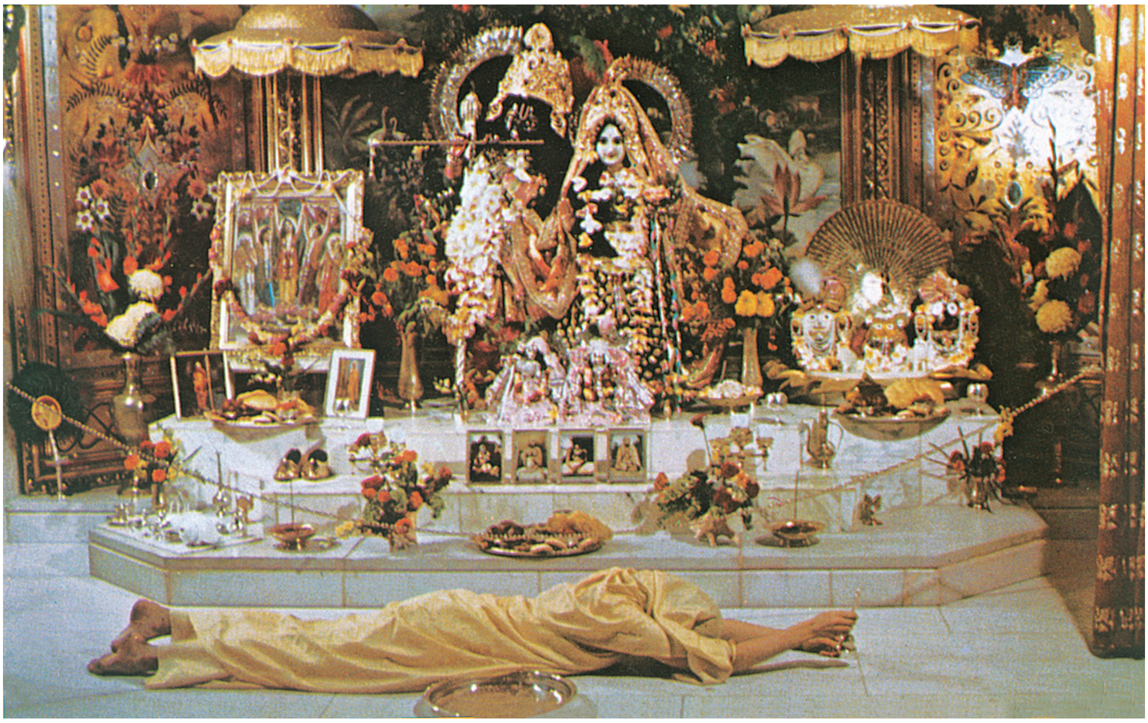
The eight bodily parts are described as follows:

*dorbhyāṁ padbhyāṁ ca jānubhyām*
*urasā śirasā dṛśā*
*manasā vacasā ceti*
*praṇāmo 'ṣṭāṅga īritaḥ*

"One should bow down with both arms, both feet, both knees, the chest, head, eyes, heart, and words. This is called bowing down with eight parts of the body." (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 8.360)

*Daṇḍavat* is within the category of *vandanam,* one of the nine processes of devotional service. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, *"Vandanam* means *namaskuru*—offering obeisances or offering prayers.*" (Bhāg.* 7.5.23–24, Purport)

Another way to offer respects with one's body involves five parts: knees, arms, head, intellect, and words. (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 8.361) The simplest form of *vandanam* is the *añjalī mudrā* or *praṇām mudrā,* where the devotee folds the hands



Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

*In the early 1970s, a* pūjārī *offers a meal to Rādhā-Govinda in the Brooklyn, New York, temple.*

and slightly bows the head.

When *vandanam* refers to the offering of prayers, the prayers can be said with or without specific bodily postures. On the other hand, when offering respect with one's body, one should recite a prayer or mantra aloud. (*The Nectar of Devotion,* Chapter 8; *Bhāg.* 11.27.45)

## Catagories of Vocal Vandanam

There are categories of vocal *vandanam* as there are categories of bodily *vandanam.* The first category of vocal prayer is an expression of feeling, as in the following:

*yuvatīnāṁ yathā yūni*
*yunāṁ ca yuvatau yathā*
*mano 'bhiramate tadvan*
*mano me ramatāṁ tvayi*

"Just as the minds of young women take pleasure in thinking of young men and the minds of young men take pleasure in thinking of young women, kindly let my mind take pleasure in You [Kṛṣṇa] alone." (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.20.19)

The second type of vocal prayer is a declaration of humility:

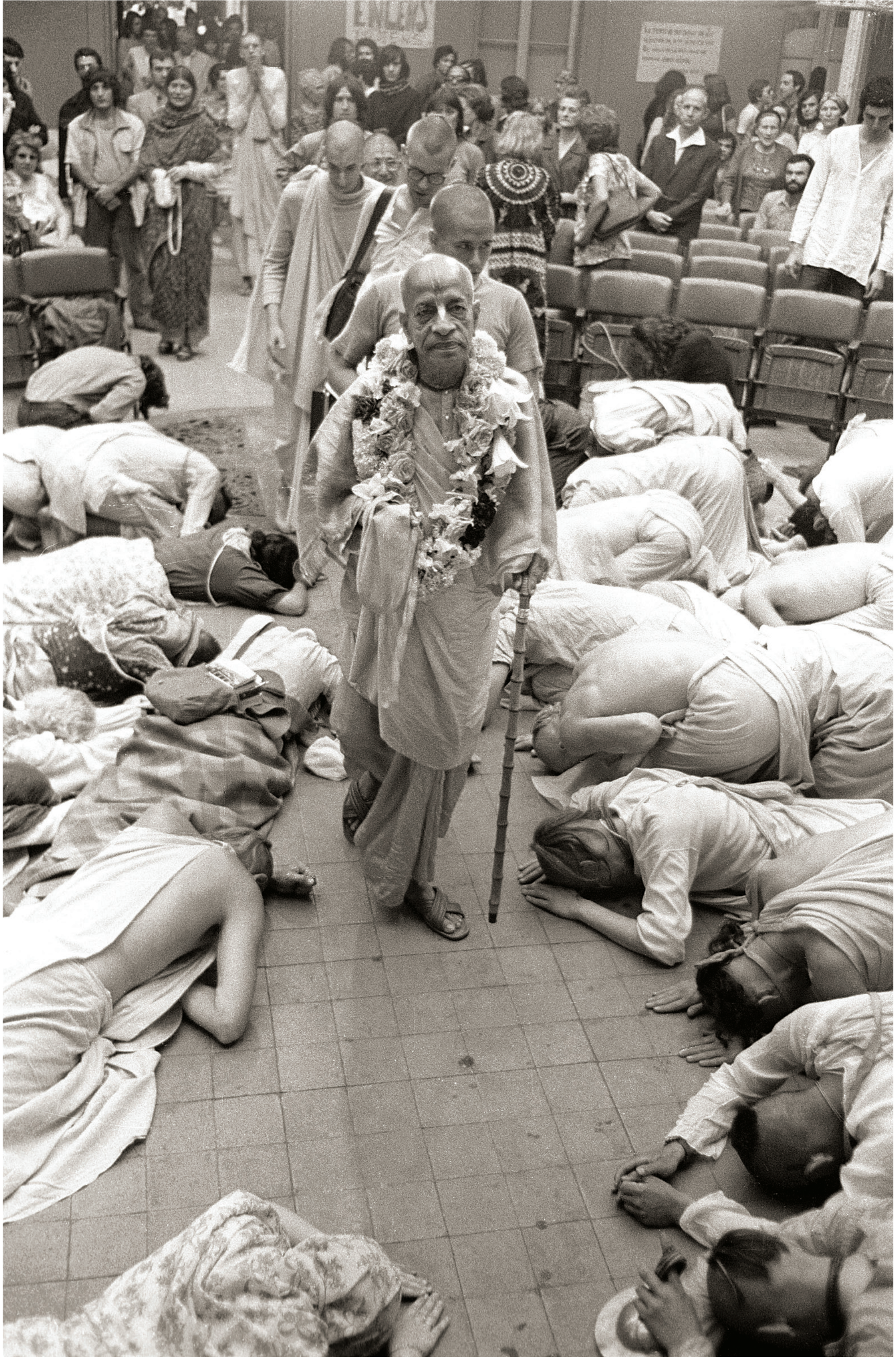
*mat-samo nāsti pāpātmā*
*nāparādhī ca kaścana*
*parihāre 'pi lajjā me*
*kiṁ bruve puruṣottama*

"Dear Lord, let us inform you that no one is more sinful than us, nor is there any offender like us. Even if we wanted to mention our sinful activities, we would immediately become ashamed. And what to speak of giving them up!" (*Padma Purāṇa,* quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.154)

The third are prayers suitable for those in advanced consciousness, where submission is combined with a specific request for perfected service, such as fanning the transcendental body of the Lord.

Prayers with or without bodily postures of respect can be simple yet elegant, such as the greatest mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. By calling the names of the Lord and His pleasure energy, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is a request for loving service.

In addition to, or instead of, the types of prayers mentioned above, devotees often say prayers glorifying their spiritual master when they offer bodily respect. Another simple prayer to say while offering *daṇḍavat* is *prasīda bhagavan:* "O Lord, please be merciful to me!" (*Bhāg.* 11.27.45) The devotee should then stand with folded hands before the Lord and pray, "O my Lord, please protect me, who am surrendered unto You. I am most fearful of this ocean of material existence, standing as I am in the mouth of death." (*Bhāg.* 11.27.46)



*Disciples offer* daṇḍavat *to their spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda.*

*Daṇḍavat,* the bodily expression of full submissive prayer, is a graphic and tangible reminder to the *bhakti-yogi* of his or her trusting love for the Lord and gives much satisfaction to the devotee's heart. When Kṛṣṇa sees the devotee offering *daṇḍavat,* His own naturally soft heart melts with satisfaction and He offers all protection and peaceful freedom from fear, as He promises in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66). Devotees offering *daṇḍavat* feel peace and arise ready to dedicate themselves in loving service. Therefore, in his instructions to his wife Diti on the process of *bhakti-yoga,* the sage Kaśyapa said, "One should . . . with great delight and satisfaction, offer obeisances, falling straight like a rod [*daṇḍavat*]." (*Bhāg.* 8.16.42) And Śukadeva Gosvāmī, while explaining how a woman should perform the Puṁsavana ceremony, says, "One should offer obeisances unto the Lord with a mind humbled through devotion. While offering *daṇḍavat* by falling on the ground like a rod, one should chant the above mantra ten times. . . ." (*Bhāg.* 6.19.10)

## Scriptural Examples

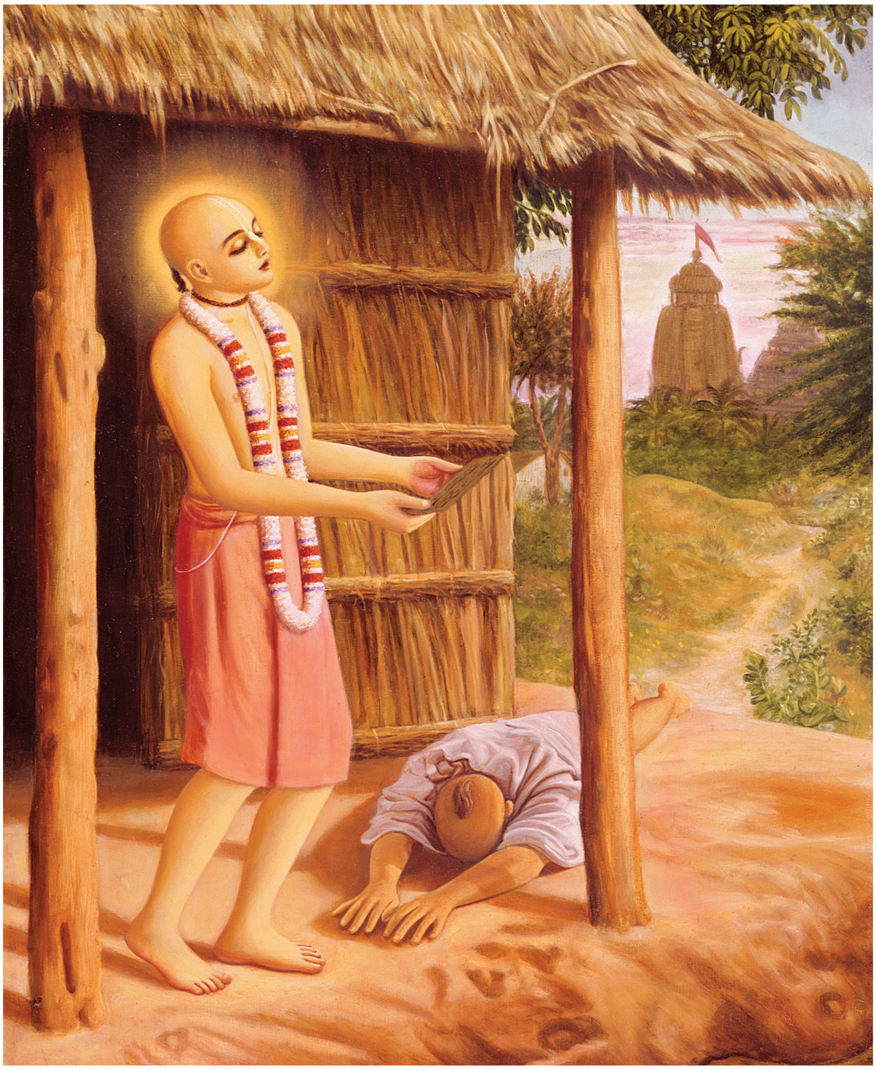
Many scriptural examples of offering *daṇḍavat* can inspire us in our own practice, whether we are trying *daṇḍavat* for the first time, perhaps with some trepidation, or whether *daṇḍavat* is part of our regular *bhakti-yoga* practice. The first example is Kaśyapa's wife Diti, as just mentioned. Fear of her enemies and envy of their position of power had engulfed her. Through *daṇḍavat,* prayers, and worship of the Lord, Diti became purified and filled with peace.

Other ancient examples include Prince Dhruva, who, desiring to see the Lord, performed austere yoga in the forest when he was a mere child. When Lord Viṣṇu appeared before him, Dhruva offered *daṇḍavat* in great love. When he arose he "looked upon the Lord as if he were drinking the Lord with his eyes, kissing the lotus feet of the Lord with his mouth, and embracing the Lord with his arms." (*Bhāg.* 4.9.3) The goddess Aditi, when seeing the Lord after her worship, had a response similar to Dhruva's:

> When the Supreme Personality of Godhead became visible to Aditi's eyes, Aditi was so overwhelmed by transcendental bliss that she at once stood up and then fell to the ground like a rod [*daṇḍa-vat*] to offer the Lord her respectful obeisances. Aditi stood silently with folded hands, unable to offer prayers to the Lord. Because of transcendental bliss, tears filled her eyes, and the hairs on her body stood on end. Because she could see the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face, she felt ecstasy, and her body trembled. (*Bhāg.* 8.17.5–6)

There are many examples of devotees offering *daṇḍavat* during the time of Kṛṣṇa's appearance at the beginning of the current world age. When the demigod Brahmā, the chief universal engineer, saw the sweetness and opulence of Kṛṣṇa, he offered *daṇḍavat* and his glowing golden form appeared like a falling gold rod, with the helmets of his four heads touching Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. The many celestial beings who saw Kṛṣṇa in His city of Dwarka offered Him *daṇḍavat.* Offering *daṇḍavat* was the first act of the wives of Kāliya when they begged Kṛṣṇa to forgive their husband for poisoning the Yamuna River in Kṛṣṇa's rural home.

In more contemporary examples, the great saint and teacher



Painting by Gauri Devī Dāsī

*In Jagannatha Puri, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī offers* daṇḍavat *to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.*

Sanātana Gosvāmī regularly offered *daṇḍavat* to Lord Caitanya, at one time keeping his distance because of an oozing skin disease. In that incident, Caitanya Mahāprabhu was so pleased with Sanātana's humble surrender that He embraced Sanātana and declared that he smelled like a combination of heavenly fragrances. After the embrace, Sanātana found himself cured. Sanātana's brother Rūpa Gosvāmī also regularly offered *daṇḍavat* to the Lord. A prostitute who had tried to seduce the saint Haridāsa Ṭhākura ended up becoming his disciple. She then offered *daṇḍavat* to Haridāsa in apology. Although an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya showed respect to His mother by offering *daṇḍavat* to her.

Evidence that offering *daṇḍavat* has been part of temple worship for millennia is found in ancient stone carvings throughout the huge complex of the Sri Rangam temple of South India. Etched into the floor in various places are images of a man and a woman offering *daṇḍavat* side by side. As stated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* local villagers all offered *daṇḍavat* to the deity Gopāla daily. Śrīla Prabhupāda also taught his followers to demonstrate surrender through the bodily act of offering *daṇḍavat,* which brings as much satisfaction today as it has for hundreds or thousands of years, whether one is a resident of earth or the higher planets, whether one is old or young, male or female, rich or poor. We might note that in some areas of India, modern local customs dictate that women offer only five-part obeisances or some modified form of *daṇḍavat,* rather than the full *daṇḍavat* described in Vedic scriptures. Such local customs have also become the norm in ISKCON, although evidence suggests that Prabhupāda approved of women offering *daṇḍavat,* even in later years of his time with us. For example, my godsister Ramaṇīyā Devī Dāsī described for me her initiation in New Mayapur, France, in 1976:

> When the first devotees were called to come up to receive their beads from Prabhupāda and recite the four regulative principles, they were bowing down in front of Prabhupāda but not full-out *daṇḍavats.* So Prabhupāda said that everyone should give full *daṇḍavats* when they come in front of him to receive their beads.
>
> I was the next one called to come, and I asked a godsister what I should do. Should I give *daṇḍavats* or not? She said, "Why not!" So I went in front of Prabhupāda and gave full *daṇḍavats.* A photo shows a sari on the floor in front of Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda had a big smile. He was very pleased with me for following his instruction.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda taught his followers to demonstrate surrender through the bodily act of offering *daṇḍavat*.**

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to a disciple (November 15, 1974), "You have also mentioned to repeatedly offer obeisances to your spiritual master. This is very important. A disciple should offer *daṇḍavats,* not *namaskāra.* The more one becomes fixed up in guru obeisances, the more he advances in spiritual progress."

I would like to see a return to the original tradition, because regardless of one's material position, when offering *daṇḍavat* one truly feels the sentiment expressed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in his *Bhajana Rahasya:*

*yo 'haṁ mamāsti yat kiñcid*
*iha loke paratra ca*
*tat sarvaṁ bhavato 'dyaiva*
*caraṇeṣu samarpitam*

"Myself and whatever little I possess in this world and in the next—all this I now offer unto Your [Kṛṣṇa's] lotus feet."

The *Skanda Purāṇa* states: "A person who bows down before Lord Viṣṇu is glorified on Viṣṇuloka for a period of time equal to a thousand years multiplied by the number of particles of dust that decorated his body as he bowed down." (Quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 8.371) And Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us that such a practice gives this result: "The person who has once offered respects, bowing down before the deity, will not come back to this world, because he will go directly to the abode of Kṛṣṇa." (*The Nectar of Devotion,* Chapter 9) *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* states: "A devotee who falls down to the ground to offer *daṇḍavat* obeisances to Lord Viṣṇu drops all his sins at that spot. They will never rise from there again." What is perhaps astonishing is this statement: "A hypocrite who makes a show of bowing down before Lord Kṛṣṇa, who holds the Śārṅga bow, becomes purified of hundreds of sins. His sins are destroyed in a moment." (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 8.370)

We should not be surprised at such wonderful results, for Kṛṣṇa Himself has said in the *Gītā* (9.34), "Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me, and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." Externally, the act of offering *daṇḍavat* may seem simple and even ritualistic. But performed with attention and care, it binds the loving soul and the beloved Lord in an eternal union of loving surrender.

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## KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS:

# The Golden Opportunity

*The Golden Avatar delivered the gold standard of spiritual practices for this age.*

By Satyarāja Dāsa

IN GENERAL, people like gold. It represents wealth and success. A golden age refers to an era of goodness and plenty, acknowledged in Greek, Roman, and Indian cultures. If you have everything, you were born with a golden spoon in your mouth. The Golden Rule is the epitome of cosmic justice or fairness: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. As the saying goes, "As good as gold."

In Kṛṣṇa consciousness we have the Golden Avatar, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the best of divine incarnations. He is Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined, and it doesn't get any better than that. To be more specific, He is of golden hue because, though Kṛṣṇa, He has taken on Śrī Rādhā's mood and complexion (*rādhā-bhāva-dyutī suvalitam*). Thus, He is female and male, a particularly profound manifestation of the supreme. His golden complexion is emblematic of His intense beauty.

What's more, Caitanya Mahāprabhu brings with Him a snippet of the Golden Age. That is to say, within the darkness of Kali, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy in which we now find ourselves, we can access an age of love. It is a facsimile of Satya-yuga, a time, millions of years ago, when all beings lived happy and prosperous lives. Mahāprabhu Himself initiated this modern reflection of the Satya age when He appeared in India some five hundred years ago, and all who partake of His process—the chanting of God's holy names—can avoid being victimized by the horrors of Kali. Instead, they can bask in the glories of *prema,* or love of God.

### Lust vs. Love

*Prema* is itself compared to gold. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 4.164) tells us, "Lust and love have different characteristics, just as iron and gold have different natures." The next text elaborates (4.165): "The desire to gratify one's own senses is *kāma* [lust], but the desire to please the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa is *prema* [love]."

One might compare lust to the misuse of gold or think of it as gold's bad side. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.17.39) we learn that gold can encourage falsity, intoxication, prostitution, envy, and enmity. Similarly, countless books and songs have been written about the pains associated with "love" in the material world, about the horrors of being betrayed or deceived, as when one's beloved goes off with another.

How can something so pure lead to

*Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Golden Avatar, delivered the gift of chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names.*

Painting by Puṣkara Dāsa

PUSKAR

something so bad? The answer is that in this world when love leads to hardship and pain it is usually not love at all. It is, rather, lust, or love's grossly materialistic counterpart. As in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* verse already mentioned, we can understand the distinction between the two quite simply: When our love is egocentric, focused on our own gratification, it is merely lust—iron, not gold. And when it is theocentric, focused on God and in a spirit of selflessness, it is true love. Indeed, it is gold.

Even in the material sphere we can see that when we are selfless and giving in our relationships, they bear sweeter fruit. But still we can be exploited. The highest kind of love, then, is love of God. This is the true gold standard, for it takes us out of the world of exploitation and into the realm of dedication, where true love becomes the very fabric of our being: It is expressed towards God directly, and through Him to all living entities, who are brothers and sisters under God's fatherhood.

The Golden Avatar brings with Him a golden process meant to help us distinguish between lust and love, between cheap iron and valuable gold. Simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—one can partake of this golden opportunity.

In fact, it is this chanting process that makes this age truly golden. As Śukadeva Gosvāmī says in the *Bhāgavatam* (12.3.51), "My dear King, although Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra,* one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom."

But chanting, like all other forms of meditation, must be executed in the proper way. The seed of the sacred sound comes through a bona fide preceptor. Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled to the United States in 1965 and shared the goldmine of the holy name by initiating people into Kṛṣṇa consciousness, thereby making them shine like molten gold. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.12) tells us, "As bell metal can be transformed into gold when treated with mercury, a disciple initiated by a bona fide guru immediately attains the position of a *brāhmaṇa.*"

A Vedic text defines *brāhmaṇa* as "one who knows Brahman." Knowledge of Brahman, spiritual truth, descends into the heart of a sincere disciple through hearing from a self-realized spiritual master and committing to the process he or she offers. This knowledge and commitment blossoms into divine love, making the disciple golden in every way. It is this blessing that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement seeks to share with the world.

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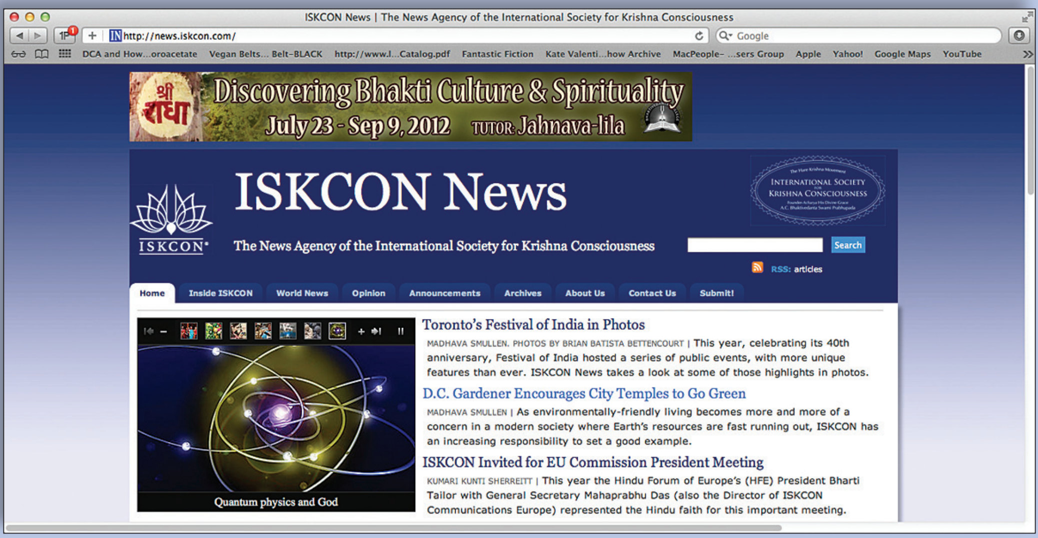
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Toronto's Festival of India in Photos

MADHAVA SMULLEN. PHOTOS BY BRIAN BATISTA BETTENCOURT | This year, celebrating its 40th anniversary, Festival of India hosted a series of public events, with more unique features than ever. ISKCON News takes a look at some of those highlights in photos.

D.C. Gardener Encourages City Temples to Go Green

MADHAVA SMULLEN | As environmentally-friendly living becomes more and more of a concern in a modern society where Earth's resources are fast running out, ISKCON has an increasing responsibility to set a good example.

ISKCON Invited for EU Commission President Meeting

KUMARI KUNTI SHERREITT | This year the Hindu Forum of Europe's (HFE) President Bharti Tailor with General Secretary Mahaprabhu Das (also the Director of ISKCON Communications Europe) represented the Hindu faith for this important meeting.

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## BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

# DHRUVA FLIES TO VAIKUṆṬHA

*Dhruva Mahārāja accepts the invitation of Nanda and Sunanda, chief associates of Lord Viṣṇu, to ride a transcendental plane back to Godhead.*

### CANTO 4: CHAPTER 12

**25** सुदुर्जयं विष्णुपदं जितं त्वया
यत्सूरयोऽप्राप्य विचक्षते परम्
आतिष्ठ तच्चन्द्रदिवाकरादयो
ग्रहर्क्षताराः परियन्ति दक्षिणम्

*sudurjayaṁ viṣṇu-padaṁ jitaṁ tvayā*
*yat sūrayo 'prāpya vicakṣate param*
*ātiṣṭha tac candra-divākarādayo*
*graharkṣa-tārāḥ pariyanti dakṣiṇam*

*sudurjayam*—very difficult to achieve; *viṣṇu-padam*—planet known as Vaikuṇṭhaloka or Viṣṇuloka; *jitam*—conquered; *tvayā*—by you; *yat*—which; *sūrayaḥ*—great demigods; *aprāpya*—without achieving; *vicakṣate*—simply see; *param*—supreme; *ātiṣṭha*—please come; *tat*—that; *candra*—the moon; *diva-ākara*—sun; *ādayaḥ*—and others; *graha*—the nine planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto); *ṛkṣa-tārāḥ*—stars; *pariyanti*—circumambulate; *dakṣiṇam*—to the right.

**To achieve Viṣṇuloka is very difficult, but by your austerity you have conquered. Even the great ṛṣis and demigods cannot achieve this position. Simply to see the supreme abode [the Viṣṇu planet], the sun and moon and all the other planets, stars, lunar mansions, and solar systems are circumambulating it. Now please come; you are welcome to go there.**

PURPORT: Even in this material world the so-called scientists, philosophers, and mental speculators strive to merge into the spiritual sky, but they can never go there. But a devotee, by executing devotional service, not only realizes what the spiritual world actually is, but factually goes there to live an eternal life of bliss and knowledge. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is so potent that by adopting these principles of life and developing love of God one can very easily go back home, back to Godhead. ① Here the practical example is the case of Dhruva Mahārāja. While the scientist and philosopher go to the moon but are disappointed in their attempts to stay there and live, the devotee makes an easy journey to other planets and ultimately goes back to Godhead. ② Devotees have no interest in seeing other planets, but while going back to Godhead, they see all of them as passing phases, just as one who is going to a distant place passes through many small stations.

**(1) What is the example of Dhruva Mahārāja regarding going to other planets?**
**(2) When going back to Godhead, how do devotees relate to the material planets?**

## 26 अनास्थितं ते पितृभिरन्यैरप्यङ्ग कर्हिचित्
आतिष्ठ जगतां वन्द्यं तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्

*anāsthitaṁ te pitṛbhir*
*anyair apy aṅga karhicit*
*ātiṣṭha jagatāṁ vandyaṁ*
*tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam*

*anāsthitam*—never achieved; *te*—your; *pitṛbhiḥ*—by forefathers; *anyaiḥ*—by others; *api*—even; *aṅga*—O Dhruva; *karhicit*—at any time; *ātiṣṭha*—please come and live there; *jagatām*—by the inhabitants of the universe; *vandyam*—worshipable; *tat*—that; *viṣṇoḥ*—of Lord Viṣṇu; *paramam*—supreme; *padam*—situation.

**Dear King Dhruva, neither your forefathers nor anyone else before you ever achieved such a transcendental planet. The planet known as Viṣṇuloka, where Lord Viṣṇu personally resides, is the highest of all. It is worshipable by the inhabitants of all other planets within the universe. Please come with us and live there eternally.**

PURPORT: When Dhruva Mahārāja went to perform austerities, he was very determined to achieve a post never dreamed of by his forefathers. ③ His father was Uttānapāda, his grandfather was Manu, and his great-grandfather was Lord Brahmā. So Dhruva wanted a kingdom even greater than Lord Brahmā could achieve, and he requested Nārada Muni to give him facility for achieving it. The associates of Lord Viṣṇu reminded him that not only his forefathers but everyone else before him was unable to attain Viṣṇuloka, the planet where Lord Viṣṇu resides. ④ This is because everyone within this material world is either a *karmī*, a *jñānī*, or a yogi, but there are hardly any pure devotees. The transcendental planet known as Viṣṇuloka is especially meant for devotees, not for *karmīs, jñānīs,* or yogis.

Great *ṛṣis* or demigods can hardly approach Brahmaloka, and as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā,* Brahmaloka is not a permanent residence. Lord Brahmā's duration of life is so long that it is difficult to estimate even the duration of one day in his life, and yet Lord Brahmā also dies, as do the residents of his planet. *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.16) says, *ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar āvartino 'rjuna:* except for those who go to Viṣṇuloka, everyone is subjected to the four principles of material life, namely birth, death, old age, and disease. The Lord says, *yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama:* "The planet from which, once going, no one returns, is My supreme abode." (Bg. 15.6) Dhruva Mahārāja was reminded, "You are going in our company to that planet from which no one returns to this material world." Material scientists are attempting to go to the moon and other planets, but they cannot imagine going to the topmost planet, Brahmaloka, for it is beyond their imagination. ⑤ By material calculation, traveling at the speed of light it would take forty thousand light-years to reach the topmost planet. By mechanical processes we are unable to reach the topmost planet of this universe, but the process called *bhakti-yoga,* as executed by Mahārāja Dhruva, can give one the facility not only to reach other planets within this universe, but also to reach beyond this universe to the Viṣṇuloka planets. We have outlined this in our small booklet *Easy Journey to Other Planets.*

**(3) Who are Dhruva's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather?**
**(4) What are the four main categories of people in this world?**
**(5) How long would it take to travel to Brahmā's planet by mechanical means?**
**(6) What are the three processes for moving in outer space?**

## 27 एतद्विमानप्रवरमुत्तमश्लोकमौलिना
उपस्थापितमायुष्मन्नधिरोढुं त्वमर्हसि

*etad vimāna-pravaram*
*uttamaśloka-maulinā*
*upasthāpitam āyuṣmann*
*adhiroḍhuṁ tvam arhasi*

*etat*—this; *vimāna*—airplane; *pravaram*—unique; *uttama-śloka*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *maulinā*—by the head of all living entities; *upasthāpitam*—sent; *āyuṣman*—O immortal one; *adhiroḍhum*—to board; *tvam*—you; *arhasi*—are worthy.

**O immortal one, this unique airplane has been sent by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is worshiped by selected prayers and who is the chief of all living entities. You are quite worthy to board such a plane.**

PURPORT: According to astronomical calculation, along with the polestar there is another star, which is called Śiśumāra, where Lord Viṣṇu, who is in charge of the maintenance of this material world, resides. Śiśumāra or Dhruvaloka can never be reached by anyone but the Vaiṣṇavas, as will be described by the following *ślokas.* The associates of Lord Viṣṇu brought the special airplane for Dhruva Mahārāja and then informed him that Lord Viṣṇu had especially sent this airplane.

The Vaikuṇṭha airplane does not move by mechanical arrangement. ⑥ There are three processes for moving in outer space. One of the processes is known to the modern scientist. It is called *ka-pota-vāyu. Ka* means "outer space," and *pota* means "ship." There is a second process also called *kapota-vāyu. Kapota* means "pigeon." One can train pigeons to carry one into outer space. The third process is very subtle. It is called *ākāśa-patana.* This *ākāśa-patana* system is also material. Just as the mind can fly anywhere one likes without mechanical arrangement, so the *ākāśa-patana* airplane can fly at the speed of mind. Beyond this *ākāśa-patana* system is the Vaikuṇṭha process, which is completely spiritual. The airplane sent by Lord Viṣṇu to carry Dhruva Mahārāja to Śiśumāra was a completely spiritual, transcendental airplane. Material scientists can neither see such vehicles nor imagine how they fly in the air. The material scientist has no information about the spiritual sky, although it is mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (*paras tasmāt tu bhāvo 'nyaḥ*).

मैत्रेय उवाच
28 निशम्य वैकुण्ठनियोज्यमुख्ययो-
र्मधुच्युतं वाचमुरुक्रमप्रियः
कृताभिषेक कृतनित्यमङ्गलो
मुनीन् प्रणम्याशिषमभ्यवादयत्

*maitreya uvāca*
*niśamya vaikuṇṭha-niyojya-mukhyayor*
*madhu-cyutaṁ vācam urukrama-priyaḥ*
*kṛtābhiṣekaḥ kṛta-nitya-maṅgalo*
*munīn praṇamyāśiṣam abhyavādayat*

*maitreyaḥ uvāca*—the great sage Maitreya said; *niśamya*—after hearing; *vaikuṇṭha*—of the Lord; *niyojya*—associates; *mukhyayoḥ*—of the chief; *madhu-cyutam*—like pouring honey; *vācam*—speeches; *urukrama-priyaḥ*—Dhruva Mahārāja, who was very dear to the Lord; *kṛta-abhiṣekaḥ*—took his sacred bath; *kṛta*—performed; *nitya-maṅgalaḥ*—his daily spiritual duties; *munīn*—to the sages; *praṇamya*—having offered obeisances; *āśiṣam*—blessings; *abhyavādayat*—accepted.

**The great sage Maitreya continued: Mahārāja Dhruva was very dear to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ⑦ When he heard the sweet speeches of the Lord's chief associates in the Vaikuṇṭha planet, he immediately took his sacred bath, dressed himself with suitable ornaments, and performed his daily spiritual duties. Thereafter he offered his respectful obeisances to the great sages present there and accepted their blessings.**

PURPORT: We should mark how dutiful Dhruva Mahārāja was in his devotional service, even at the time he left this material world. He was constantly alert in the performance of devotional duties. Every devotee should take his bath early in the morning and decorate his body with *tilaka.* In Kali-yuga one can hardly acquire gold or jeweled ornaments, but the twelve *tilaka* marks on the body are sufficient as auspicious decorations to purify the body. Since Dhruva Mahārāja was living at that time at Badarikāśrama, there were other great sages there. He did not become puffed up because the airplane sent by Lord Viṣṇu was waiting for him; as a humble Vaiṣṇava, he accepted blessings from all the sages before riding on the plane brought by the chief of the Vaikuṇṭha associates.

29 परीत्याभ्यर्च्य धिष्ण्याग्र्यं पार्षदावभिवन्द्य च
इयेष तदधिष्ठातुं बिभ्रद्रूपं हिरण्मयम्

*parītyābhyarcya dhiṣṇyāgryaṁ*
*pārṣadāv abhivandya ca*
*iyeṣa tad adhiṣṭhātuṁ*
*bibhrad rūpaṁ hiraṇmayam*

*parītya*—having circumambulated; *abhyarcya*—having worshiped; *dhiṣṇya-agryam*—the transcendental airplane; *pārṣadau*—unto the two associates; *abhivandya*—having offered obeisances; *ca*—also; *iyeṣa*—he attempted; *tat*—that plane; *adhiṣṭhātum*—to board; *bibhrat*—illuminating; *rūpam*—his form; *hiraṇmayam*—golden.

**⑧ Before getting aboard, Dhruva Mahārāja worshiped the airplane, circumambulated it, and also offered obeisances to the associates of Viṣṇu. In the meantime he became as brilliant and illuminating as molten gold. He was thus completely prepared to board the transcendental plane.**

PURPORT: In the absolute world, the plane, the associates of Lord Viṣṇu, and Lord Viṣṇu Himself are all spiritual. There is no material contamination. In quality, everything there is one. As Lord Viṣṇu is worshipable, so also are His associates, His paraphernalia, His airplane, and His abode, for everything of Viṣṇu's is as good as Lord Viṣṇu. Dhruva Mahārāja knew all this very well, as a pure Vaiṣṇava, and he offered his respects to the associates and to the plane before riding in it. But in the meantime, his body changed into spiritual existence, and therefore it was illuminating like molten gold. In this way he also became one with the other paraphernalia of Viṣṇuloka.

Māyāvādī philosophers cannot imagine how this oneness can be achieved even in different varieties. Their idea of oneness is that there is no variety. Therefore they have become impersonalists. As Śiśumāra, Viṣṇuloka, or Dhruvaloka are completely different from this material world, so a Viṣṇu temple within this world is also completely different from this material world. As soon as we are in a temple we should know very well that we are situated differently from the material world. ⑨ In

**(7) What did Dhruva Mahārāja do after hearing from the associates of Viṣṇu?**
**(8) What did Dhruva Mahārāja do just before he boarded the airplane?**
**(9) How is a temple of Lord Viṣṇu different from the material world?**

the temple, Lord Viṣṇu, His throne, His room, and all other things associated with the temple are transcendental. The three modes, *sattva-guṇa, rajo-guṇa,* and *tamo-guṇa,* have no entrance into the temple. It is said, therefore, that to live in the forest is in the mode of goodness, to live in the city is in the mode of passion, and to live in a brothel, liquor shop, or slaughterhouse is in the mode of ignorance. But to live in the temple means to live in Vaikuṇṭhaloka. Everything in the temple is as worshipable as Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa.

## 30 तदोत्तानपदः पुत्रो ददर्शान्तकमागतम्
मृत्योर्मूर्ध्नि पदं दत्त्वा आरुरोहाद्भुतं गृहम्

*tadottānapadaḥ putro*
*dadarśāntakam āgatam*
*mṛtyor mūrdhni padaṁ dattvā*
*ārurohādbhutaṁ gṛham*

*tadā*—then; *uttānapadaḥ*—of King Uttānapāda; *putraḥ*—son; *dadarśa*—could see; *antakam*—death personified; *āgatam*—approached him; *mṛtyoḥ mūrdhni*—on the head of death; *padam*—feet; *dattvā*—placing; *āruroha*—got up; *adbhutam*—wonderful; *gṛham*—on the airplane which resembled a big house.

**When Dhruva Mahārāja was attempting to get on the transcendental plane, he saw death personified approach him. Not caring for death, however, he took advantage of the opportunity to put his feet on the head of death, and thus he got up on the airplane, which was as big as a house.**

PURPORT: To take the passing away of a devotee and the passing away of a nondevotee as one and the same is completely misleading. While ascending the transcendental airplane, Dhruva Mahārāja suddenly saw death personified before him, but he was not afraid. Instead of death's giving him trouble, Dhruva Mahārāja took advantage of death's presence and put his feet on the head of death. People with a poor fund of knowledge do not know the difference between the death of a devotee and the death of a nondevotee. ⑩ In this connection, an example can be given: a cat carries its kittens in its mouth, and it also catches a rat in its mouth. Superficially, the catching of the rat and the kitten appear to be one and the same, but actually they are not. When the cat catches the rat in its mouth it means death for the rat, whereas when the cat catches the kitten, the kitten enjoys it. When Dhruva Mahārāja boarded the airplane, he took advantage of the arrival of death personified, who came to offer him obeisances; ⑪ putting his feet on the head of death, he got up on the unique airplane, which is described here to be as big as a house (*gṛham*).

There are many other similar instances in *Bhāgavata* literature. ⑫ It is stated that when Kardama Muni created an airplane to carry his wife, Devahūti, all over the universe, the airplane was like a big city, carrying many houses, lakes, and gardens. Modern scientists have manufactured big airplanes, but they are packed with passengers, who experience all sorts of discomforts while riding in them.

Material scientists are not even perfect in manufacturing a material airplane. In order to compare to the plane used by Kardama or the plane sent from Viṣṇuloka, they must manufacture an airplane equipped like a big city, with all the comforts of life—lakes, gardens, parks, etc. Their plane must be able to fly in outer space and hover, and visit all other planets. If they invent such a plane, they will not have to make different space stations for fuel to travel into outer space. Such a plane would have an unlimited supply of fuel, or, like the plane from Viṣṇuloka, would fly without it.

**(10) Explain the analogy of the cat carrying its kittens versus carrying a rat.**
**(11) To give us an idea of its size, to what is the plane Dhruva Mahārāja boarded compared?**
**(12) What were some of the features of the airplane Kardama Muni had created for Devahūti?**

## 31 तदा दुन्दुभयो नेदुर्मृदङ्गपणवादयः
गन्धर्वमुख्याः प्रजगुः पेतुः कुसुमवृष्टयः

*tadā dundubhayo nedur*
*mṛdaṅga-paṇavādayaḥ*
*gandharva-mukhyāḥ prajaguḥ*
*petuḥ kusuma-vṛṣṭayaḥ*

*tadā*—at that time; *dundubhayaḥ*—kettledrums; *neduḥ*—resounded; *mṛdaṅga*—drums; *paṇava*—small drums; *ādayaḥ*—etc.; *gandharva-mukhyāḥ*—the chief residents of Gandharvaloka; *prajaguḥ*—sang; *petuḥ*—showered; *kusuma*—flowers; *vṛṣṭayaḥ*—like rains.

**At that time drums and kettledrums resounded from the sky, the chief Gandharvas began to sing, and other demigods showered flowers like torrents of rain upon Dhruva Mahārāja.**

## 32 स च स्वर्लोकमारोक्ष्यन् सुनीतिं जननीं ध्रुवः
अन्वस्मरदगं हित्वा दीनां यास्ये त्रिविष्टपम्

*sa ca svarlokam ārokṣyan*
*sunītiṁ jananīṁ dhruvaḥ*
*anvasmarad agaṁ hitvā*
*dīnāṁ yāsye tri-viṣṭapam*

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

# Impersonalism: The Supreme Illusion

*The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in September 1975 on an early-morning walk in Vrindavan, India.*

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Both the living entity and Lord Kṛṣṇa are full of consciousness. The living entity's consciousness is within himself, and Kṛṣṇa's consciousness pervades everywhere. That's the distinction.

**Disciple:** The Māyāvādīs [impersonalists] say that when we become liberated, we will also pervade everywhere. We will merge into Brahman and lose our individual identity.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That means you will forget everything. Whatever little consciousness you had will be finished.

**Disciple:** But what we will be forgetting is just illusion anyway.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** If that is liberation, then let me kill you now. You will forget everything—liberation. [*Laughter.*]

[*A passerby is singing in Hindi.*] This is liberation—he is singing, "O my Lord Kṛṣṇa, when will I surrender unto Your lotus feet?" That is liberation. Just like a child fully surrendered to his parents—he is liberated. He has no anxiety. He is confident: "Oh, my parents are here. Whatever they do is all right for me. No one can harm me."

**Disciple:** The impersonalists say that liberation is getting rid of all misery.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, if you are full of anxieties, where is your liberation?

**Disciple:** They say this can be accomplished if we become one with the Supreme.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Kṛṣṇa is the supreme consciousness. If you lose

your consciousness, how do you become one with Him?

**Disciple:** Well, it's not exactly that we lose our consciousness but that we merge into the supreme consciousness.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That means you want to become God. But why are you different from God now?

**Disciple:** It's my *līlā* [pastime].

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** But if it's your *līlā,* then why are you undergoing so much austerity to gain liberation?

**Disciple:** The point is that the supreme consciousness is unembodied, but we are embodied right now. So, when we attain supreme consciousness, we will also become unembodied.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** But how have you become embodied if you are the Supreme? What made you embodied? You don't like to be embodied—the body is bringing so much suffering—so you want liberation. But whoever made you embodied—He is the Supreme. You are not the Supreme.

**Disciple:** I put myself in illusion so that I can enjoy becoming liberated.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Why would any sane man put himself in a position of being repeatedly kicked by the material nature in the form of birth, old age, disease, and death? What is the enjoyment?

**Disciple:** Without pain, how can you experience pleasure?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Then let me kick you, and you can enjoy pleasure when I stop.

**Disciple:** The idea is that after experiencing the suffering of this world, liberation will be very sweet.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** But why is there suffering? If you are supreme, why is there any suffering for you? What is this nonsense—"Suffering is my *līlā*"?

**Disciple:** It's suffering only for those who don't understand that they are supreme. They are the ones who suffer, but I don't.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Then you are just like the hogs and dogs. They do not understand that this is suffering. But we can understand. Therefore the Māyāvādīs are *mūḍhas,* fools and rascals, who don't know what suffering is or what enjoyment is. *Muḍho 'yaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam.* Kṛṣṇa says, "The fools and rascals don't know that I am Supreme." Therefore, after many lifetimes of suffering and talking all kinds of nonsense, one who has real knowledge surrenders to Kṛṣṇa (*bahūnāṁ janmanām ante jñanavān māṁ prapadyate*). That is knowledge. When one comes to this awareness—"I have simply suffered, and I have tried to delude myself by a jugglery of words"—then he surrenders to Kṛṣṇa.

**Disciple:** So the Māyāvāda philosophy is actually the supreme illusion?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. *Māyāvādī bhāṣya śunile haya sarva-nāśa:* "One who follows the Māyāvāda philosophy is finished." He's doomed; he will become absorbed in that false philosophy and never be able to accept real philosophy. Māyāvādīs are offenders. Therefore they shall remain perpetually in ignorance and think themselves God. They openly preach, "Why are you thinking that you are sinful? You are God."

## How to Put BTG in Your Will

After providing for their families and loved ones, subscribers may want to put *Back to Godhead* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this work. In the USA, bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government.* You can give needed support for *Back to Godhead* by simply including the following words in your will: *I give, devise, and bequeath to* Back to Godhead, *18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615* (insert amount being given here) *to be used to support* Back to Godhead *and its related activities, including the Krishna.com website.* A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name BTG as a contingency beneficiary in the event someone named in your will is no longer living. It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

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*If you live outside the USA, check the estate tax laws for your country.

**Disciple:** The Christians have a concept of sin. When the Māyāvādīs went to America, they told the Christians, "Forget this idea of sin. Whatever you do, it is all right, because you are God."

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** The Christian priests did not like the Māyāvāda philosophy. The Māyāvādīs are atheists, more than the Buddhists. The Buddhists do not accept Vedic authority. Therefore they are considered atheists. But the Māyāvādī rascals accept the *Vedas* and preach atheism. So they are more dangerous than the Buddhists. The Buddhists, although they are supposed to be atheists, worship Lord Buddha. He is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, so one day they will be delivered. But Māyāvādīs will never be delivered.

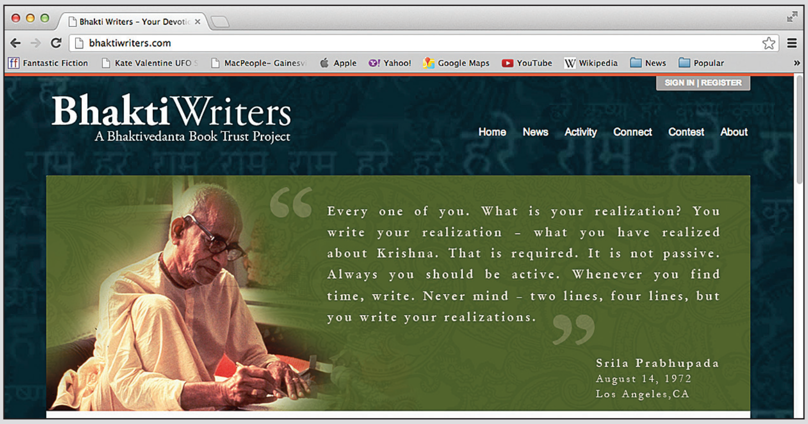
Kṛṣṇa assures us in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.66]: "Just surrender to Me and I will free you from all dangers." And we accept Kṛṣṇa. That's all. Our method is very easy. The child is trying to walk, but he is unable and he's falling down. The father says, "My dear child, just catch my hand." Then the child is safe.

These Māyāvādīs go against the verdict of God. God says, "The living entities are part and parcel of Me," and the Māyāvādīs say, "I am God." That is their foolishness. If they were equal to God, why does God say, "Surrender to Me"? They are not God. They are simply rascals who are claiming to be equal to God because they do not want to surrender to Him.

So this knowledge—that "I must surrender to God"—comes only after many, many births. Then one gives up this foolish word jugglery and attains real liberation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

# e-Krishna

## *Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites*



“Every one of you. What is your realization? You write your realization – what you have realized about Krishna. That is required. It is not passive. Always you should be active. Whenever you find time, write. Never mind – two lines, four lines, but you write your realizations.”

Srila Prabhupada
August 14, 1972
Los Angeles,CA

**bhaktiwriters.com** is the website of the Bhakti Writers Community, a project of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT). An online network for devotee writers across the globe, the Bhakti Writers Community brings together experienced writers and those who want to improve their skills and associate with others interested in writing for Vaiṣṇava and secular audiences.

The Bhakti Writers Community hopes to increase the writing and publication of Vaiṣṇava literature by providing incentives such as publishing opportunities and competitions. The community also provides educational resources, including online seminars, discussion forums, and links to useful websites.

The goal of the site is “to create an atmosphere that fosters creativity and encourages writing in the hope that each member will grow as a writer, learn and contribute to the learning of others, and openly and effectively express thoughts, ideas, and information.”

If you are looking for a place to discuss devotional writing, then this is the ideal website for you. The Bhakti Writers Community functions like a social network, where you create an account and join groups based on various subjects.

To make the best use of the Bhakti Writers Community you should create an account and log in. This gives you full access to the groups and forums so you can meet other writers and join discussions. To create an account you will need to use the credentials of your existing Facebook, Google, or Yahoo account.

The toolbar across the top of the site gives you access to the various areas within. Clicking on the NEWS button allows you to read about the activities of the other community members who have been successful in publishing a story or an article. Here you will also find news about upcoming contests and updates on what is happening around the community.

Clicking on the ACTIVITY button brings you to your personal Bhakti Writers home page, or Activity Stream. This page automatically updates itself with links to the writers groups you have joined and the discussion forums you are participating in. You can also see messages you have received from other group users as well as links to the pages of the other writers you have made friends with on the site. On this page you can also see who has been active on the site recently and post messages, links, or photos.

Clicking on the CONNECT button gives you access to four areas: Forums, Groups, Members, and Sites. In Forums you will find the Reading, Writing, Publishing, Contests, and Technical Support forums. Within these forums you can start discussions and share ideas about these subjects. In the Technical Support forum you can get help with questions you have about how to best use the site. You can also share your suggestions for additions or improvements. Under the Groups link are subject areas you can participate in, and you can start your own group and invite your friends to join. Under the Members link you can see who else participates in the Writers Community and which ones you have become friends with. You can see who has been active recently and what forums they have been participating in. When you click on the Sites link you can see a list of websites where other community members share their writing.

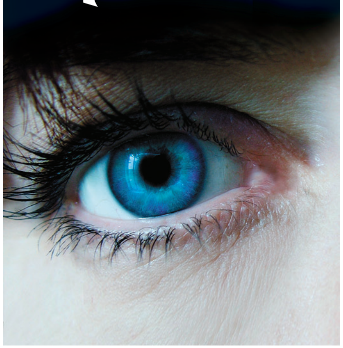
The CONTESTS button on the toolbar takes you to information about the latest writing competitions. Some competitions have prizes and some offer publishing opportunities.

The LOGOUT button is especially useful if you use public access points like libraries or Internet cafes.

When you are logged in, the HOME button will always bring you back to your personal Bhakti Writers home page, known as the Activity Stream. When you are not logged in, the HOME button takes you to the website log-in page. —*Antony Brennan*

THE VEDIC OBSERVER

Transcendental Commentary on the Issues of the Day



Photographer: Susan Quinland-Stringer / Agency: Dreamstime.com

# Delhi Gang-Rape and The Modern Śūrpaṇakhā

By Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

*"The sexual exposure we face is unparalleled in the history of mankind. . . . Because pornography and sex have such a forceful pull on us, if left unchecked our society will erode before our very eyes. We will have millions of people who have sexual addictions."*

—Dr. Kevin B. Skinner in *Treating Pornography Addiction*

LAST DECEMBER, the horrifying gang-rape of a young physiotherapy student in a private bus in Delhi sparked outrage across India. The innocuous-seeming circumstances in which the rape occurred, the bloodcurdling brutality of the perpetrators, the ineptitude of the police, and the seeming insensitivity of the Prime Minister all added fuel to the fire.

Before addressing this issue, I offer my sincere prayers for the departed soul of the victim and my heartfelt condolences to her bereaved and traumatized family. *Gītā* wisdom teaches us that all of us are relatives, connected in God's all-encompassing family. So we are all together in getting over this tragedy.

The Delhi horror underscores undeniably that India's female citizens absolutely require much better security. We need a more vigilant police force, prompter help-lines, and stronger and swifter punishments for sexual assaulters.

Yet will better security be enough? Might our society be suffering from a more deep-rooted malaise of which this gruesome rape is an intolerably stinking symptom? After all, the news periodically reports incidents of scary sexual violence. School-teacher extracting sexual favors from a female student in the classroom; father having incest with his daughter in the presence of his son; mother and daughter hacking to death a man with whom both had an affair—these are the headlines from just a week's news.

Surely something is terribly wrong in our society, but what is it?

The topic of sexual assault is complex; sociologists include anger, power, and sadism among its causes. Here, I will focus on one important aspect largely overlooked by the media but illumined by Vedic wisdom.

## *The Little-Discussed Śūrpaṇakhā Factor*

In the Vedic tradition, the demon Rāvaṇa, the villain of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* is the emblem of lust. Lust so dominated Rāvaṇa that he abducted beautiful women wherever he found them and forced them to join his harem. He even raped a relative, the celestial nymph Rambhā, who was married to his nephew. Thereafter he was cursed to die if he ever raped any woman. So, when he abducted Sītā to enjoy her sexually, he threatened to kill and eat her if she didn't voluntarily comply. Thus, for the sake of gratifying his sexual appetite, he had a proclivity to rape and commit other types of horrible violence against women. He finally met his just end when Lord Rāma administered capital punishment.

We all know of Rāvaṇa's perversity, but a crucial detail underlying his perversity is less known. The *Rāmāyaṇa* describes that though thoughts of possessing Sītā initially allured Rāvaṇa, he gave up his evil intentions when he heard of Rāma's unmatchable power. However, when his malicious sister Śūrpaṇakhā incited him by describing Sītā's beauty explicitly and provocatively, he lost all sense and courted self-destruction. Śūrpaṇakhā had her own scores to settle, and she used Rāvaṇa as her pawn by inciting him.

The *Rāmāyaṇa,* in addition to being an ancient history, features characters who are prototypes for perennial themes. In our current context, Rāvaṇa obviously symbolizes sexual perverts like the Delhi rapists. What does Śūrpaṇakhā symbolize? She symbolizes the forces that incite people sexually

Adnan Abidi | Reuters

and make them behave in Rāvaṇa-like ways.

### *The Modern Śūrpaṇakhā*

Today's primary sexual inciter, the modern Śūrpaṇakhā, is the commercial world that uses sex to sell its products. The commercial world knows that sex is the best sales tool because nothing catches people's attention and triggers their imagination as much as sex. So it exploits sex as its ubiquitous marketer and fills our culture with sexually provocative images.

This commercial exploitation of sex is all the more flagrant in the entertainment industry, especially Hollywood and Bollywood, where sex is arguably the most glamorized product on sale. And the modern Śūrpaṇakhā is at its blatant worst as the pornography industry, where sex, even brutal sex, is the only product on sale. Commercial porn websites, magazines, books, videos, DVDs, cable television, and so on, comprise one of the most lucrative global industries. In the United States alone, porn revenue is larger than the combined revenues of all professional football, baseball, and basketball franchises.

Due to this massive commercial exploitation, sex is thrust upon us from all directions—TV, theaters, Internet, magazines, and billboards. Practically wherever we look, sexually provocative images are pushed into our eyes. The way human culture has become sexualized in the last several decades has no precedent in world history.

### *The Deadly Consequence Of Liberalization*

The modern Śūrpaṇakhā incites in a much more insidious way than the *Rāmāyaṇa* Śūrpaṇakhā. It fools us into believing that becoming its pawn—that is, becoming sexually incited—is a sign of sexual liberalization. To understand how such liberalization can entrap us, let's first look at the rationale for sexual restraint.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.11) offers us insight into the sanctity of sex: When performed within the precincts of dharma, it offers us an opportunity to experience the divine. Sex enables us to become co-creators with God in bringing new life into the world.

At the same time, *Gītā* wisdom cautions us that sex divorced from this divine perspective and purpose becomes motivated by a deadly force that impels people into perversity. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.36), Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa, "What makes people act sinfully, even against their will?" This eternally relevant question resonates at the moment. Kṛṣṇa answers (*Gītā* 3.37) that the evil inner impeller is lust, which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of the world. Then He outlines how a philosophically informed and devotionally centered culture empowers us to keep lust under control.

Traditionally, the sacred inviolable covenant of marriage regulated the sexual force. The modern Śūrpaṇakhā has persuaded us that this covenant is too regressive and repressive, and so we need to liberate ourselves from it. Being thus taken in, we approve the release of this force from within the fence of covenant each time we delight in sexually explicit imagery, language, and music.

However, lust once released can rapidly veer out of control. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.39) states that lust is like an insatiable fire. Indulgence acts as the fuel that aggravates the fire. So, when we release the force of lust a bit through indulgence, it becomes that much stronger and demands more release through greater indulgence. When we accede, it becomes stronger still and demands still greater release, thereby trapping us. What we might have thought of as unconscionable before we released lust may over time become acceptable, then enjoyable, and finally irresistible. This is how the

*Demonstrators protest against the government's response to the Delhi gang-rape.*

modern Śūrpaṇakhā turns many people into sexual perverts.

The English satirist Alexander Pope in *An Essay on Man* echoes how vice—the modern Śūrpaṇakhā in our context—inverts our sensibilities:

Vice is a monster of so frightful
    mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her
    face,
We first endure, then pity, then
    embrace.

Understanding this insidious nature of lust can help us see the link between the generic commercial exploitation of sex and this specific ghastly sexual assault: The force that we release in the name of liberalization is the same force that in a later stage impels such fiendish crimes.

**The barbarism of the rapists is not an anomaly that can be rectified just by stronger legal measures.**

By no means is this metaphorical analysis of lust as a monster meant to shift the blame away from the rapists; they are responsible for letting the monster pervert them. The purpose of this analysis is to point out that their barbarism is not an anomaly that can be rectified just by stronger legal measures; it is a detestable but natural consequence of the feverish sexualization that has permeated our culture.

### *How the Unconscionable Can Become the Real*

We may doubt: "Most commercial depictions of sex in the media portray romantic and consensual sex. How can that lead to such perversity?"

Not all commercial sexual depictions are consensual; the reprehensible glamorizing of violent sex in extreme forms of pornography is a significant exception. But even if we set aside this exception, the fact remains that the commercial depiction of sex is designed to trigger lust. And once aroused, this hideous monster can become blind to the difference between sanctified sex and profane sex. It can become blinder still so as to see no difference between consensual sex and forcible sex. And at its blindest, it can no longer distinguish between sex alone and sex mixed with violence, torture, maiming, and murder. Due to this blinding nature of lust, the *Bhagavad-gītā* cautions us that it is "the destroyer of knowledge and self-realization" (3.41) and "our eternal enemy" (3.39).

Those who give a free rein to this monster become modern Rāvaṇas. In fact, they end up becoming worse than the *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāvaṇa; the barbarous violence of the Delhi rapists exceeded what Rāvaṇa did to anyone. These perverts need to be swiftly and visibly meted out the necessary severe punishment, as was done by Lord Rāma to Rāvaṇa.

But we also need to remember that the Śūrpaṇakhā that incited them is inciting everyone, including us. Of course, the savagery of the Delhi rapists is unthinkable for any civilized person. Yet, appalling as all incidents of sexual violence are, they happen frequently not just in India but all over the world. So, it would surely be naïve and simplistic to demonize these perpetrators alone and give a clean chit to everyone else, including ourselves.

Perhaps this revolting gang-rape is the jolt necessary to drive home the reality that self-serving interests are manipulating us, exploiting our sexuality to fill their bank accounts while propelling us on a self-destructive track of increasingly aggressive lust. Liberalization is the ploy that is deceiving us to willingly, even eagerly, play into the hands of the modern Śūrpaṇakhā.

If we don't curb the modern Śūrpaṇakhā, then just as the knowledge of Rāma's power couldn't deter the lust-maddened Rāvaṇa, the knowledge of severe legal punishments won't deter the modern lust-maddened Rāvaṇas.

### *The Fetish for Political Correctness*

Today speaking against sexual liberalization is widely considered politically incorrect. Severe political backlash silences anyone with the audacity to suggest that anything might be wrong with liberalization.

Pertinently, the *Rāmāyaṇa* depicts the results of a fetish for political correctness. Soon after Rāvaṇa played into the hands of Śūrpaṇakhā and abducted Sītā, he started witnessing the consequences of his suicidal folly: Hanumān with his tail-blazing exploits reduced nearly half of Lanka to ashes.

The distraught Rāvaṇa called an emergency meeting of his ministers. In that council, saying that the demon-king had erred in abducting Sītā was politically incorrect. So his bootlicking ministers just recommended better security measures for Lanka as the solution. Hardly anyone dared to go against the canon of political correctness. The only vocal politically incorrect dissident was Vibhīṣaṇa; he boldly and firmly urged Rāvaṇa to give up his lust for Sītā and return her to Rāma.

Unfortunately, Rāvaṇa was too possessed by the monster of lust to even consider this sound advice. He curtly silenced Vibhīṣaṇa's dissenting voice and thereby sealed his own pact with death.

Despite the differences between this *Rāmāyaṇa* situation and the gang-rape aftermath, the central point of the parallel is valid and vital: Will we choose political correctness or corrective reform?

### *Towards a Liberalizing Respiritualization*

If we choose reform, then each one of us can make a tangible contribution. All of us have the power to stop being puppets of the modern Śūrpaṇakhā; we can individually rebel against the rabid sexualization of our culture. Each time we dress, each time we look at others, each time we respond to sexually overt or covert language, we have the power to make a statement: "I will no longer be a pawn in the hands of those who exploit my sexuality." Every such statement is not just a statement; it is also a contribution to the progressive curing of the sexual fever that is pandemic in our culture.

To accelerate this healing, *Gītā* wisdom offers us an intellectual foundation and a practical pathway. It helps us understand that we are not our bodies, but are eternal souls. We are beloved parts of Kṛṣṇa, who is our all-attractive all-loving Lord. Our infatuation with sex is a distorted reflection of our original love for Him. By redirecting our love towards Him, we can relish a deep inner happiness that helps us regulate and transcend sexual craving.

And the process of devotional service offers us a practical means to redirect our love towards Kṛṣṇa. Devotional culture naturally focuses on Kṛṣṇa and minimizes all distractions. That's why in such a culture neither men nor women highlight or aggravate their sexuality. Instead, both focus on developing their latent spirituality. We see each other not as potential sex objects but as spiritual beings, as fellow travelers on an epic devotional voyage back to Kṛṣṇa. Such a vision helps us strive undistractedly for inner fulfillment. The more we become spiritually fulfilled, the more we become liberated from the constant craving for sex. When sexual fantasies no longer dissipate our mental energy, we become free to fully use our abilities and resources for our own and others' holistic well-being. That is real liberalization indeed.

Decreasing the sexualization of our culture and participating in its re-spiritualization—that is the twofold solution to the grave problem of sexual violence.

## In Honor of Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā

*The Appearance Anniversary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu*

In the month of January in the year 1406 of the Śaka Era (A.D. 1485), Lord Kṛṣṇa entered the bodies of both Jagannātha Miśra and Śacī.

Jagannātha Miśra said to Śacīmātā, "I see wonderful things! Your body is effulgent, and it appears as if the goddess of fortune were now staying personally in my home. Anywhere and everywhere I go, all people offer me respect. Even without my asking, they voluntarily give me riches, clothing, and paddy."

Śacīmātā told her husband, "I see wonderfully brilliant human beings appearing in outer space, as if offering prayers."

Jagannātha Miśra then replied, "In a dream I saw the effulgent abode of the Lord enter my heart. From my heart it entered your heart. I therefore understand that a great personality will soon take birth."

After this conversation, both husband and wife were very jubilant, and together they rendered service to the household *śālagrāma-śilā.* In this way the pregnancy approached its thirteenth month, but still there was no sign of the delivery of the child. Thus Jagannātha Miśra became greatly apprehensive. Nīlāmbara Cakravartī [the grandfather of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu] then did an astrological calculation and said that in that very month, taking advantage of an auspicious moment, the child would take birth. Thus in the year 1407 of the Śaka Era [A.D. 1486], in the month of Phālguna [February-March], in the evening of the full-moon day, the desired auspicious moment arrived. [According to the Jyotir-veda, or Vedic astrology, the auspicious birth moment is described as follows:] The moon was in Leo [the figure of the lion in the zodiac], Leo was the ascendant, several planets were strongly positioned, and the *ṣaḍ-varga* and *aṣṭa-varga* showed all-auspicious influences. When the spotless moon of Caitanya Mahāprabhu became visible, what would be the need for a moon full of black marks on its body? Considering this, Rāhu, the black planet, covered the full moon, and immediately vibrations of "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Hari!" inundated the three worlds.

All people thus chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* during the lunar eclipse, and their minds were struck with wonder. When the whole world was thus chanting the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa in the form of Gaurahari advented Himself on the earth. The whole world was pleased. While the Hindus chanted the holy name of the Lord, the non-Hindus, especially the Muslims, jokingly imitated the words. While all the ladies vibrated the holy name of Hari on earth, in the heavenly planets dancing and music were going on, for the demigods were very curious. In this atmosphere, all the ten directions became jubilant, as did the waves of the rivers. Moreover, all beings, moving and nonmoving, were overwhelmed with transcendental bliss. Thus by His causeless mercy the full moon, Gaurahari, rose in the district of Nadia, which is compared to Udayagiri, where the sun first becomes visible. His rising in the sky dissipated the darkness of sinful life, and thus the three worlds became joyful and chanted the holy name of the Lord.

—*Śrī Caitanya-caritṛmṛta,*
*Ādi-līlā* 13.80–98

# Sickness

## A FRIEND AND TEACHER

*Though illness may restrict or halt our normal spiritual activities, it can provide spiritual benefits we might not otherwise gain.*

By Vaṁśī Vihārī Dāsa

AFTER SEVEN DAYS of sickness, malarial fever had broken me down to the bones, and loss of appetite and hallucinations added miseries. I struggled to practice my daily chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. But in those seven days I gained in ways that would not have been possible had I not been sick.

We have to accept the truth that we will inevitably fall sick. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.15) that suffering is in the nature of this world. So whoever we may be, we can't be too optimistic about living a disease-free life. But the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can help us avoid emotional breakdown while we are sick, provided we keep our attitude right.

Besides the physical distress, we dislike sickness because it puts us off our routine life. Our lives tend to center on a particular activity, like a business or a service, and any hindrance to that is perceived as a threat to our sustenance.

My illness threatened my spiritual life, so when I fell sick I asked myself, "Why do we assume only good health is favorable to serving Kṛṣṇa? Can we not serve when sickness forces us to be less active?"

Sickness need not be nondevotional; it can be highly spiritual. Devotional service is described as *apratihatā*, or uninterrupted in any circumstance. In other words, no material situation is powerful enough to obstruct devotional service. Though our bodies and their sicknesses are material, devotional service is transcendental to them. Sickness might inactivate our body, but by choosing the proper attitude we can act on the platform of soul.

We have examples. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saint Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura chanted many holy names of Kṛṣṇa daily even as old age was stealing his strength. And even on his deathbed, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued his devotional service of

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“The person who is
not disturbed by happiness
and distress and is
steady in both is certainly
eligible for liberation.”

—Lord Kṛṣṇa, *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.15

translating the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* [See the sidebar "Śrīla Prabhupāda's Example."]

### Seeing Kṛṣṇa's Purpose

If we can understand why Kṛṣṇa is putting us in this predicament, the bitterness of sickness can reduce or even turn into sweetness. We have to be convinced that Kṛṣṇa is our best friend (*Gītā* 5.29) and does not send us unnecessary suffering. Since time immemorial we have loaded our existence with a boundless burden of sinful activities. That burden is a barrier in our journey toward Kṛṣṇa (*Gītā* 7.28). To bring us back to Godhead, Kṛṣṇa needs to purify our existence—sometimes by giving good health and allowing us to perform various devotional services, and sometimes by giving us sickness and suffering. Just as fire purifies gold, the fire of suffering purifies us of sinful reactions. Sickness also teaches us important lessons not only critical for our internal growth but difficult to learn otherwise.

**Sickness can reveal the true level of our spiritual connection by showing whether our foundation is shallow or deep.**

One of my devotee friends shared his realization that Kṛṣṇa takes the risk of being blamed: "Oh! I am trying to serve You, Kṛṣṇa, and You are giving me problems. What kind of God are You?"

But as a true well-wisher, Kṛṣṇa is concerned not about being blamed but about ending our material existence as soon as possible. Of course, during difficulties He also provides the strength we need to endure.

Like a doctor intent on healing a patient, Kṛṣṇa works hard to purify us. Accepting His ways without complaint and blame encourages Him to continue His treatment, whereas an uncooperative attitude may encourage Him to stop. Therefore, we should be grateful that Kṛṣṇa is spending so much of His energy for our benefit.

Sickness humbles us. We may normally be very active, but sickness puts a break on our activity. We may be proud of our abilities and strengths, but sickness reveals our total dependence on Kṛṣṇa for these.

Sickness can reveal the true level of our spiritual connection by showing whether our foundation is shallow or deep—that is, based on a genuine desire to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness in any circumstance. If we are open, we may find the revelation humbling, which in spiritual life is helpful. So, illness can be a turning point in our life. We may understand that we have forced Kṛṣṇa to put us into this predicament to take us out of the illusion that life in the material world is "the good life."

During sickness, our reduced activity and daily spiritual practices and our increased dependence on others may humble us in front of friends and peers, hurting our false ego. But, for Kṛṣṇa, our purification and reconnection with Him take priority over protecting our false ego.

Years ago I read the poem "Reduced," by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami:

> My list of Things to Do
> falls to the side.
> All I do is rest.
> Yet one cry to Kṛṣṇa
> is worth a hundred days
> of marching in pride.

Sickness can become a golden opportunity for us to realize our smallness and helplessness and take shelter of Kṛṣṇa.

### Developing Relationships

Good health may give us a feeling that we are independent and don't need others' help. That attitude is unhealthy for spiritual life. To cure it, Kṛṣṇa mercifully takes away our health, and we are forced to accept our dependency on others for such basic activities as eating, cleaning our body, taking medicine, and moving around.

I used to have the attitude that if I am not taking service from others, then others should not expect service from me. Sickness breaks this solid rock of impersonalism and selfishness. Taking care of others is an essential element of Vaiṣṇava behavior. It leads to gratitude and helps us develop good relationships. Taking service from others humbles us and inspires us to serve them in return. We realize the futility of our own strengths, and we realize our need for others in maintaining even our material life, what to speak of our spiritual life.

Sometimes our hectic daily routine doesn't allow us to come close to people at work or in our personal life. But sickness provides an opportunity to understand our need for people and their prayers. When we are sick, devotees, especially, open their hearts and pray for our welfare.

Sickness can bring devotees closer to each other. When someone is sick and most in need of our service, that is a good time to show him or her our love. For five years I was fortunate to serve sick devotees in our temple. I witnessed many friendships beginning and flourishing during that time.

When we please others, especially devotees of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa bestows His unlimited mercy. He always wants to serve His devotees, and when He sees that we are helping Him do so, He becomes obliged to us.

Sickness can also contribute to relationships by helping us develop empathy. As the saying goes, "A barren woman can't understand the pain of childbirth." Our own sickness can help us feel the suffering of others when they are sick and can inspire us to offer them service in friendship.

In an incident from the *Mahābhārata,* someone asked Yudhiṣṭhira, the king of Hastinapur, to tell the most amazing thing in this world.

"Every moment we see that others are dying," he replied, "but we think we will never die."

We are no exception to the inevitability of death, though we may tend to forget it time and again. When things are going well, old age and death seem irrelevant or far away from us.

Sickness, especially chronic, bursts the illusory bubble that things will go smoothly forever. Parīkṣit Mahārāja, the last heir of the Pāṇḍu dynasty, learned that he would die in seven days. Someday we may be informed, "You have only four months left" or "Now you have to live with this disease."

Disease reveals our attachments. Are we happy that Kṛṣṇa is purifying us? Or we are disturbed that we will lose our body and things related to it? One day we'll have to leave everything behind. Sickness gives a glimpse of the inevitable and provides an opportunity to prepare. The Śrī Vaiṣṇava king Kulaśekhara wrote, "My Lord Kṛṣṇa, I pray that the swan of my mind may immediately sink down to the stems of the lotus feet of Your Lordship and be locked in their network; otherwise at the time of my final breath, when my throat is choked up with cough, how will it be possible to think of You?"

Each one of us should aspire for such Kṛṣṇa consciousness and liberation from bodily consciousness.

## Feel Kṛṣṇa's Love

Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.16) that distress helps one take shelter of Him. A devotee of Kṛṣṇa doesn't wait to become sick to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa, but when he becomes sick he tries to see Kṛṣṇa's mercy in the whole affair.

Rather than focusing on our dwindling body, if we somehow become spiritually aware we may feel Kṛṣṇa's presence and love in difficult times. Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees do that by chanting a fixed number of Kṛṣṇa's names every day, even in illness if possible. By practicing such spiritual activities, we realize that Kṛṣṇa is our mother, father, and best friend.

We have to remember that if Kṛṣṇa is allowing something to happen to us, it must be good. I have met devotees who feel that the best time of their Kṛṣṇa conscious lives was when they were going through some difficulty. Not finding any other shelter, they intensely took Kṛṣṇa's shelter and felt His presence more evidently than at any other time. That's why Kuntī Devī, the glorious mother of the Pāṇḍavas, prayed to Kṛṣṇa for more and more calamities. "Because," she reasoned, "calamities inspire me to see Your lotus face, which means I'll no longer see the face of repeated birth and death." We need not imitate Kuntī Devī by asking for more hardship, however; our destined calamities should be enough for us to turn to Kṛṣṇa.

## Taking Care of the Body

Because our body is an instrument with which to perform devotional service, taking care of it is not a material activity. Anything used in the service of the Lord is spiritualized. Besides, our body is God's property, and that's another reason we should take care of it.

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* relates an instructive incident in this regard. Sanātana Gosvāmī once had pus-oozing boils all over his body. Ignoring them, Lord Caitanya embraced Sanātana. Disgusted, Sanātana decided to commit suicide by throwing himself under the wheels of Lord Jagannātha's chariot during the Rathayātrā festival. When Lord Caitanya came to know of Sanātana's intentions, He rebuked Sanātana: "Your body belongs to Me. And one who destroys someone else's property is considered a thief."

Therefore, we should not think that unless we do something physically we cannot contribute to the society of devotees. Sickness is inevitable for everyone, sooner or later. During sickness we can keep our spirits high and be grateful. By doing this we can set an example for others by turning our sickness into a sweet blessing. What could be a better service than inspiring others in spiritual life?

If we regain our health, we need not imitate Kuntī Devī and invite sickness again, but neither should we regret our period of sickness, complain about it, or blame Kṛṣṇa. We can start appreciating spiritual things we might otherwise have taken cheaply. That attitude will open for us the doors of the spiritual world, where there is no birth, death, old age, or disease. ❁

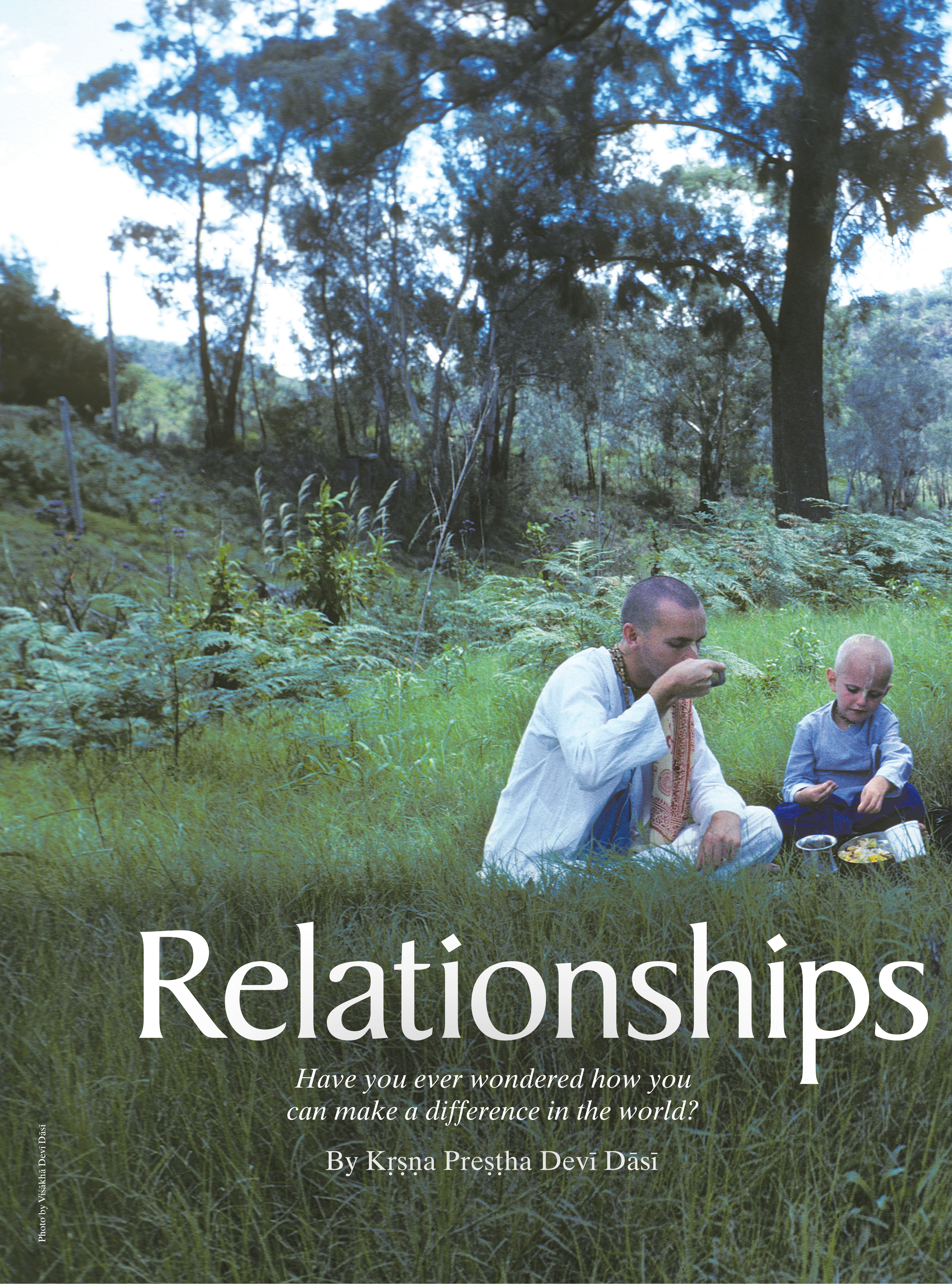
*Vaṁśī Vihārī Dāsa is the assistant editor of* Bhagavad-darshan, *the Hindi edition of BTG.*

## Śrīla Prabhupāda's Example

JULY 1977: Working on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* he was completely transcendental to his physical condition, despite the accompanying heart palpitations and despite his faint voice and general weakness. Even to sit was difficult, and yet once he began working, nothing could stop him.

Speaking into the hand microphone of his dictating machine, oblivious to his bodily condition, Prabhupāda described patiently and methodically how Nanda Mahārāja's family priest, Gargamuni, performed the name-giving ceremony for baby Kṛṣṇa. In his purports, Śrīla Prabhupāda often spoke from his personal experiences and realizations.

—*Śrīla Prabhupāda Līlāmṛta*
(Vol. 6, Chapter 8)



# Relationships

*Have you ever wondered how you can make a difference in the world?*

By Kṛṣṇa Preṣṭha Devī Dāsī

Photo by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

# Matter

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA created an international spiritual society as a means to counteract the discord on the planet and give everyone the opportunity to experience true peace and happiness by reawakening their eternal relationship with God. As someone born in ISKCON and now a counselor specializing in relationships, I invite you to explore my perspective on contributing to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission and promoting harmony and spirituality.

The setting: Wal-Mart. The time: 5:25 P.M.

I'm waiting in line at the checkout and can't help but notice the woman sitting on the motorized shopping cart in front of me, blocking my view of the aisle ahead. Suddenly, she screams at a ten-year-old boy immersed in his video game nearby.

"Cody! Cody! You blockhead, do you hear me?" she roars. "Get over here this minute!"

The boy's face turns red as he scampers over and stands by the metal spoke wheels. That's when I notice her shirt. In large letters scrawled across her chest is the name of her Christian ministry. She squints and her lips scowl. She looks absolutely miserable, and so does her son, as well as the tall, gaunt man, who I assume is her husband, standing quietly next to her. I feel sad for them all, but one thing is sure: They are a poor advertisement for her spirituality.

Do I sound judgmental? Perhaps it seems that way. But from my perspective, I'm just using discrimination. Because the nature of the soul is to be joyful, we are pleasure seekers, and accepting and rejecting are functions of the mind that we apply to our search.

"No happiness there!" I quickly conclude. "They are not my beacons of light to follow."

Two days later I'm taking my young son to our temple's school. As we walk down the grassy lane leading to the front entrance, I observe the family in front of me. The mother is smiling brightly, warmly, her big heart shining through her eyes. The father's demeanor appears loving and gentle as he holds the hand of one of his daughters and carries his smallest girl in his spare arm. The third child runs slightly ahead, apparently lost in happy thoughts. The cooperation of the couple is obvious: They are a team caring for their children. After dropping the girls off at the school, they walk side-by-side back to the temple. Their strong, loving connection is noticeable. They radiate love, cooperation, and harmony.

I smile, my heart filled with authentic joy as I recognize their harmony and love, which I, the soul, inherently seek to experience. This couple is a beacon of light, and as a therapist I feel proud of these devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, representing Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement in such a beautiful way. To me they serve as an authentic inspiration. Who would not want to experience their spirituality?

The scene took me back to the time my seven-year-old son asked me, "Mommy, are Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda real?"

"Of course they are, my dear," I replied in surprise. "Why do you ask?'

"Because it seems like barely anybody knows about Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda."

He stopped and looked me in the eyes.

"Mommy, so many people are suffering; why don't you tell more people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

He was clearly very concerned. In that moment I realized that the problems in the world are just as much my responsibility as anyone else's.

**Lord Caitanya used His beauty and His love for all as "weapons" to destroy our suffering by drawing us toward His message.**

As a mother, wife, and member of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement with an M.A. in psychology, I began to seriously consider: How can I take responsibility and be more active and instrumental in spreading spiritual awareness? How can I help Kṛṣṇa consciousness be the solution to people's sufferings?

## Caitanya's Example of Love

I began my considerations by stepping back in time five hundred years. Lord Caitanya appeared in West Bengal and flooded the world with the holy names, answering Advaita Ācārya's prayers for the Lord to descend and remove the suffering of the conditioned souls. Upon His descent, the Lord used His beauty and His love for all as "weapons" to destroy our suffering by drawing us toward His message.

Humans all want to feel love and are attracted by it. When they don't have it in their life, they suffer deeply from the terrible disease called loneliness.

I mentioned the Wal-Mart mother only to point out that her suffering and her unhealthy way of relating to her child were both sad and repelling. In contrast, the beautiful loving family at the temple was uplifting and attractive to the soul seeking joy and love.

These two examples may lie at opposite ends of the spectrum of human relationships, so to clearly understand my perspective on how Kṛṣṇa consciousness can address people's suffering, let's look at people in the middle of the spectrum.

## Two Struggling Couples

Imagine this scene: The room is thick with tension. Not a word has been spoken over the last twenty-four hours. He intently stares out the window. She glares at him from across the table, eyes anointed with disdain.

*He's always shut down and avoiding me,* she thinks bitterly. *It's obvious he doesn't value me.*

He glances over at her as he thoughtfully chews a bite of warm, fragrant basmati rice.

*This woman doesn't get me at all. I'm so sick of her expectations and feeling constantly judged.*

Suddenly, their one-year-old starts to cry. The woman quickly jumps up from the table.

"It's okay, sweet boy; mommy's here."

As she soothes the little one, her eyes shoot over to her husband, who sits quietly, chewing slowly, staring out the window, apparently oblivious of anything else.

*Why doesn't he get up once in a while and take care of his son, and just let me eat in peace?*

Her thoughts steeped in anger, she files away more evidence that he doesn't value her.

Highly sensitive to his parents' deep internal frustrations, the little devotee boy cries louder.

The parents dress their child in a

## Marriage Guidance

*Here, in letters to disciples, are some of Prabhupāda's instructions on how to cultivate a quality consciousness and harmony in marriage and other relationships.*

You are fortunate to obtain such a nice husband and he is also fortunate to obtain a nice wife. So all in all it is a very nice arrangement and certainly it is Krishna's special mercy upon you both. (December 17, 1968)

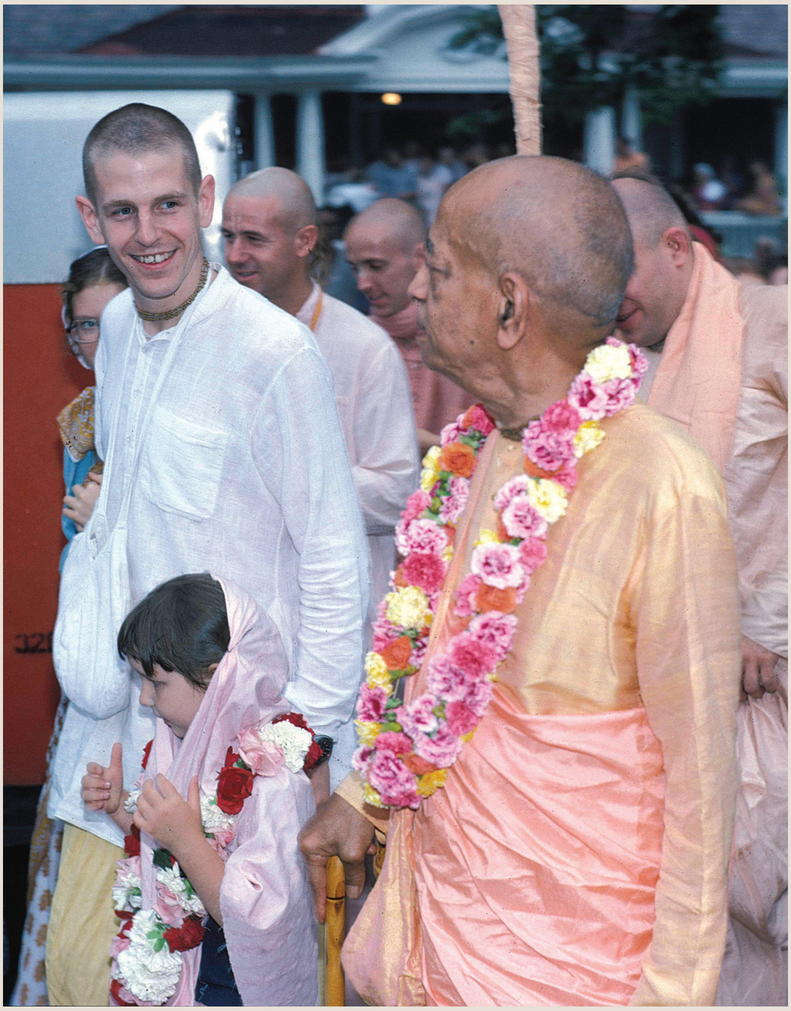
The marriage tie should be taken as very sacred. (October 7, 1968)

So my dear children, boys and girls, I request that you live happily. There is no restriction. We don't restrict eating, sleeping, mating, or defending. But do it in relationship with Krishna, pure life, and be happy in this life and next life. (July 22, 1968, Wedding Lecture)

So be happy with your nice wife and take care of her properly. (September 20, 1968)

So there must be mutual responsibility by both parties and you must both strive very hard to serve Krishna together in harmony. (September 15, 1972)

I am very glad that you two are a very good combination & your devotion for your husband & your husband's love for you are considered great achievements. I feel very happy when I see my spiritual boys and girls, especially those who have been married by my personal presence, are very happy in their conjugal relationship. Even if there is some misunderstanding between husband & wife, that should be completely neglected & you should always remain rigid in service of Krishna. As you have written to say, it is pleasing to be in the service of Krishna. (October 8, 1967)



*Prabhupāda gave much encouragement to his householder disciples.*

Yes, to call one another prabhu [master] is all right, but not to become prabhu. To accept others as prabhu and remain as servant is the idea. But because somebody is calling you prabhu, one should not become a prabhu and treat others as servants.

In other words, everyone should feel himself as servant, and not to think himself prabhu because he is being called prabhu. This will make the relationship congenial. (June 14, 1968)

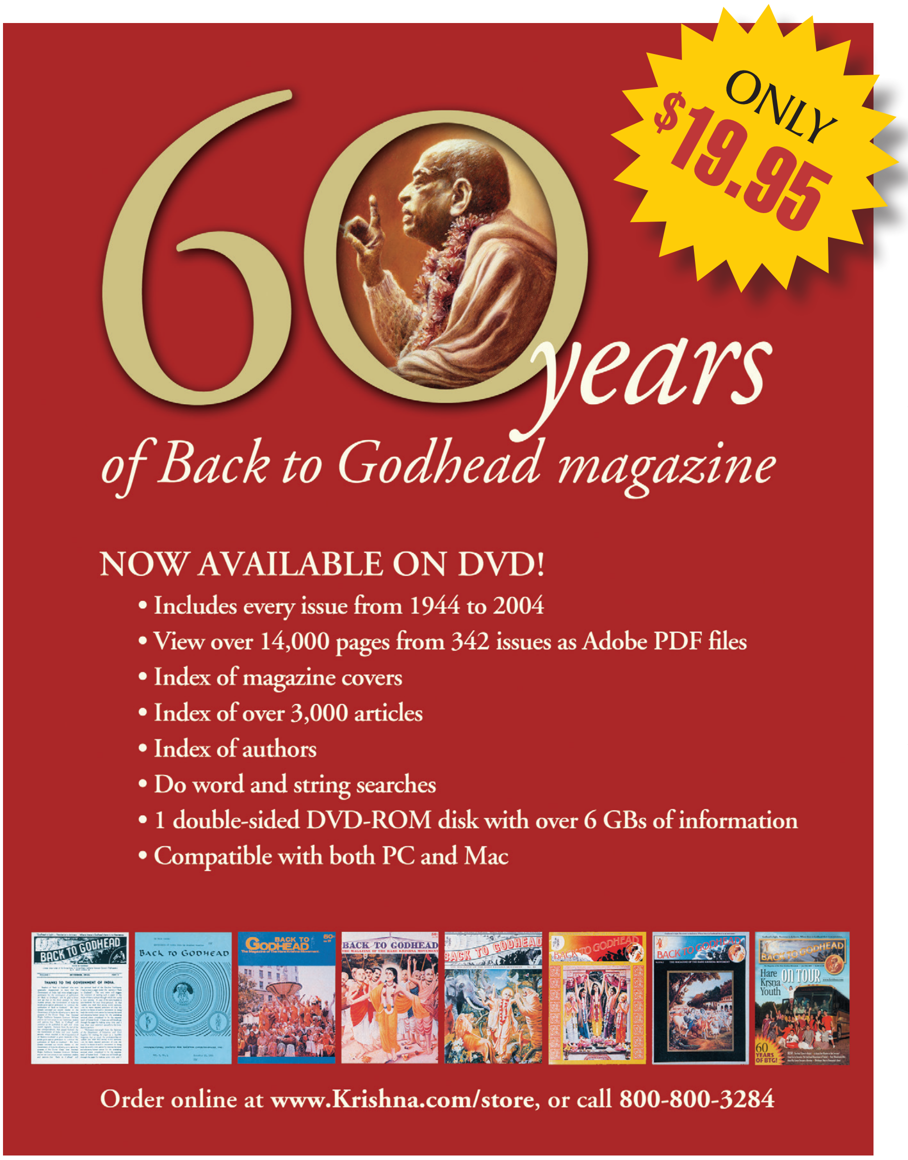
Regarding your proposed marriage . . . , she appears to be a very nice intelligent devotee, so if she is agreeable to your proposal I have all blessings for your marriage. Now please work combinedly in Krishna's service with your new wife when you are married and make your lives perfect in Krishna consciousness. That is my desire.

You should be very careful to always set the highest example of householder life in Krishna consciousness and that will automatically benefit all persons with whom you come in contact. So live and work together in Krishna consciousness and be happy chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. (August 1, 1970) yellow jumper suit, and the family drives off to the temple for the evening *ārati.* Swaying gently to the sweet, melodic *kīrtana,* bright, clean *japa* bags hanging from their necks, they look like a nice little family.

Perhaps for some the scene plays out a little differently. For example, another couple may never have had children, or the children are all grown up. They're stoically sticking it out until death separates them. They live like roommates in a stalemate, without hope of their needs ever being understood or met. Their hearts are closed from years of built-up resentment and disconnection. Meanwhile, they fully embrace the philosophy that relationships are difficult and love cannot exist in the material world.

Yes, it's true, some steadfast couples can successfully, yet somewhat miserably, eke out a low-quality, closed-hearted marriage. Others simply cannot. Their unmet needs, weak connection, and the behaviors that result eventually land them in affairs, divorce, or other extremely painful outcomes. Regardless of whether they stick together or break up, neither the couple with the child nor the childless couple will be able to help other suffering souls find refuge from their interpersonal conflicts.

We all have an impact on the harmony in this world, positive or negative. In psychology it is understood that as adults we tend to unconsciously create the same emotional environment we experienced as a child, be it of loneliness, anger, and conflict, or of joyful harmony.



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## Prabhupāda's Welcoming House

Śrīla Prabhupāda was deeply concerned about people's happiness and saw Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the means to attain it:

> We are preaching Bhagavad-gita as it is. Our mission is to spread the instructions of Krishna so that people may become happy, hopeful, and peaceful. The central point is to understand Krishna as the supreme proprietor, the supreme enjoyer and the best friend of all living beings. . . . [W]hen we accept Krishna's instructions perfectly we become automatically a perfectly religious person. Therefore the Krishna consciousness movement is not a sentimental fanaticism of so-called religion. But it is the perfect culture for peace and happiness of the whole human society. (Letter, September 15, 1975)

Prabhupāda wanted a high-quality spiritual society to attract and retain conditioned souls, providing a house the whole world could live in. His incredible vision was of a huge family coexisting in harmony, with Kṛṣṇa in the center.

If we accept Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision, we need to carefully think about how we can best create harmony, as a house filled with discord is not at all appealing. People may enter but then quickly leave.

Although we may be successful in many ways, if we radiate discord within our self, with God, or with others, then we contribute to the conflict in the world. We should consider what we wish to leave as our legacy, our contribution to happiness on earth.

Human interactions make up a large percentage of what contributes to people's happiness or suffering. Over the last ten years of my profession, I have witnessed the deep sadness, loneliness, and suffering people experience in unhappy unions, as well as how they feel their life has been saved when they achieve sustainable levels of harmony and openhearted connection by truly putting God consciousness in the center of their marriage. People want harmonious relationships and are starving for guidance. Just imagine the effect an amazing spiritual movement of *bhakti,* loaded with radiant loving families, could have on the world. How attractive and powerful it would be—letting Kṛṣṇa consciousness truly shine as the spiritual solution to material problems.

### Evolving Through Love

Marriage is an opportunity to evolve through love, stimulating spiritual growth. Relationships are like magnifying glasses that show us exactly how we need to refine ourselves spiritually. In fact, we can often find parallels between our relationships in this world and our relationship with God. With spiritually focused consciousness and intentions, we can simultaneously clean up our personal connections and improve our connection with Kṛṣṇa.

So how do we begin transforming our relationships?

Relationships become rich and sacred when we infuse them with spiritual consciousness and gratitude. When we understand that the soul we are relating with is part of God, is a divine gift, and can be seen as God loving, maintaining, and protecting us on a deep heart and soul level—in that moment the union becomes a means to love Kṛṣṇa and receive His love in return. Maintaining this vision daily is one of the great spiritual practices that helps purify us of the false ego and false sense of proprietorship. Giving up the sense of proprietorship means seeing ourselves as the servant of the servant of God and seeing the people in our life as God's gift to assist and serve with us.

In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement our practice when something falls onto the floor is to pick it up and touch it to our head, treating it as sacred, because we know it belongs to Kṛṣṇa and is being used in His service. We can apply the same consciousness to our family members. Treat them as sacred and notice how Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with our sincere demonstration of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Remember, thoughts are seeds that grow a specific fruit.

Ask yourself, "What thoughts do I cultivate about my family members? Are they thoughts of gratitude and of seeing them as an essential part of my loving service to Kṛṣṇa?"

Kṛṣṇa asks us to do everything as an offering of love to Him: "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform—do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.26) As an offering of love to Kṛṣṇa, lovingly serving the souls He places in our life is a way to cultivate a beautiful consciousness.

Each morning as you awaken, try to hold on to the peaceful vision that the companions surrounding you—your spouse, children, friends, and community—are Kṛṣṇa's direct love in your life. In line with this goal, Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully taught his disciples to create harmony. If we follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's guidance and cultivate daily thoughts, consciousness, and aligned behaviors such as he taught, we will undoubtedly experience a powerful change in the quality of our relationships and our spiritual life. [See the sidebar "Marriage Guidance."]

Many people succeed in various frontiers in their life, but human interactions tend to be difficult territory to face and master because of the nature of the false ego. When Arjuna wanted to run from his life challenge, Kṛṣṇa said, "No, stay on the battlefield, change your consciousness, and perform your activities as an offering of love to Me."

That is exactly what Arjuna did, and in doing so perfected his life.

### My Own Motivating Thoughts

To conclude on a personal note, I will share three reasons why I feel deeply inspired to create the highest quality connections possible.

1. In my joyful yet grave service

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# CALENDAR

*This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to* ***www.krishnadays.com****.*

*Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.*

## Month of Govinda

(*February 25–March 27*)

### MARCH

**2**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

**8—Vijayā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

**9**—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

**10**—Śrī Śiva Rātri, a day in honor of Lord Śiva.

**12**—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, the great devotee in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who confirmed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's discovery of Lord Caitanya's birthplace.

**23—Amalakī-vrata Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

**24**—Disappearance anniversary of Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

**27**—Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, the appearance anniversary of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of His own devotee. Fasting till moonrise.

## Month of Viṣṇu

(*March 28–April 25*)

### APRIL

**3**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

**6—Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

**15**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the eleventh century.

**20**—Śrī Rāma Navamī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra. Fasting till sunset, followed by feasting.

**22—Kāmadā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

**25**—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa, Lord Kṛṣṇa's springtime *rāsa* dance. Balarāma Rāsa Yātrā, Lord Balarāma's *rāsa* dance. Appearance anniversary of Hanumānjī, eternal servant of Lord Rāma. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, a follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

## Month of Madhusūdana

(*April 26–May 25*)

### MAY

**4**—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata,* a biography on Lord Caitanya.

**6—Pakṣa-vardhinī Mahā-Dvādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans for Varūthinī Ekādaśī.

as a mother, Kṛṣṇa has entrusted me with the care of two souls. These boys will most likely become husbands and fathers. I know how important it is to provide an environment in which my children can thrive materially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, so they in turn will hand this environment down to their children, creating generations of health.

2. I know it is an environment where I can flourish in my spiritual life, and it is a wonderful platform for me to be more powerfully of service.

3. In my heart of hearts I know that doing so pleases Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda and becomes an attractive example to conditioned souls who are also seeking peace, harmony, and happiness in their lives.

My hope is that you too will feel inspired to refine your relationships by seeing them as connected to your devotional service and spiritual evolution, thereby benefiting the world.

*Kṛṣṇa Preṣṭha Devī Dāsī, relationship specialist, works with an international clientele creating sustainable, high-quality relationships via private retreats and phone sessions. She was initiated by Hridayānanda Goswami in 1997 and lives in Alachua, Florida. She has been an advice columnist in a Florida publication for more than four years. Inquiries about relationships may be submitted to Trudeautransformations@gmail.com.*

## WRESTLING FOR KṚṢṆA

(*continued from page 19*)

the dome was finished, I wrote, I wanted to study Kṛṣṇa consciousness, unless he objected. Maharishi did not reply, but soon he made a surprise visit to Iowa. When he drove up to the dome construction site where we were working, he beamed a broad smile. During his visit, I sent a note through his personal attendant restating my plan to perform devotional service and thanking him for his inspiration in my spiritual life. Although Maharishi did not bless my plan officially, he did not object.

Perhaps one reason he let me go was that although I taught TM to several hundred people and meditated for twelve years, it was a big movement and I was not a very important person in it. However, there may have been another factor: Maharishi's guru was in the line of Śaṅkarācārya, and he must have been aware that although externally Śaṅkara was an impersonalist, or a Māyāvādī, the great teacher also composed *Bhaja Govindam*, with its famous opening refrain: "You intellectual fools! Just worship Govinda [Lord Kṛṣṇa], just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda. All your grammatical knowledge and word jugglery will not save you at the time of death."

Years later I found something interesting in a book of conversations with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Here's an excerpt (March 2, 1975, Atlanta):

> **Satsvarūpa Goswami:** This boy is Bhakta Doug, and he was close to Maharishi as a member of his executive council. One day Maharishi said, "If you really want to know the highest truth, it's Kṛṣṇa consciousness."
> **Prabhupāda:** Maharishi said like that?
> **Doug:** We'd ask him, "Who is Kṛṣṇa?" and "What about this Kṛṣṇa conscious movement?" . . . He'd kind of evade our questions. . . . He was doing some transcriptions on the *Brahma-sūtras,* and he came out, and he was in a very solemn mood, . . . and he said, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest state of consciousness."

I joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Dallas in 1980. Later I served at the Houston temple, and just before Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's divine appearance day, the temple president, Pāṇḍava Vijaya Dāsa, asked if I would act in a drama. I'd never acted in my life, but agreed. But what would be my role? He said I would play one of King Kaṁsa's wrestlers who challenged Kṛṣṇa. Another coincidence! It was a minor role, but I got to act for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, and it was fun.

A little after that, a fellow named Tony, formerly a U.S. Marine, started visiting the Houston temple and asked if he could move in to experience the life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Pāṇḍava Vijaya agreed, but on the condition that Tony commit to stay at least one month and follow the rules and regulations. He concurred, but after about a week he got restless and started to pack his bags. Although Pāṇḍava Vijaya reminded Tony about his promise, he was intent on leaving.

**It was wonderful to use wrestling, normally a mundane activity, for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and the devotees.**

Tony was muscular and proud of his military service, and Pāṇḍava got an idea.

"Tony, do you see that devotee over there? How about this: If you beat him in wrestling, you can leave now. But if he beats you, you have to stay for at least three more weeks, as you promised. What do you say?"

Unaware of my wrestling background, Tony agreed. With devotees looking on, we wrestled on the grass beside the temple. Fortunately, Tony didn't know wrestling, and I was able to prevail. It was wonderful to use wrestling, normally a mundane activity, for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the devotees.

Although Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not always easy and there are many internal and external challenges, I feel blessed to have gotten the chance to attempt to render devotional service. Since becoming a devotee, I've distributed Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, written on Kṛṣṇa conscious topics, and helped arrange booths at outdoor festivals where the devotees distribute *kṛṣṇa-prasāda* and do *harināma saṅkīrtana.* I believe my experiences with meditation helped me come closer to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but the Vedic scriptures state that silent meditation was easier to practice in earlier ages. For our current age, Śukadeva Gosvāmī recommended to Mahārāja Parīkṣit: "My dear King, although Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra,* one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.51)

George Harrison of the Beatles, whose song "My Sweet Lord" came out in 1970 and included the *mahā-mantra,* was a great inspiration to me, because he also began with meditation, then met Śrīla Prabhupāda and became a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. George donated Bhaktivedanta Manor in England to ISKCON, and when he was dying he arranged for Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees—his dear friends over many years—to chant near him so he could remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death.

A few years ago I had hip-replacement surgery and don't wrestle anymore. But my competition is not over: I have to wrestle with my materialistic mind all the time. Even though I don't deserve it, I hope against hope and pray that one day I may be blessed to wrestle with Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ❁

## THE W.R.I.T.E. SERVICE

(*continued from page 15*)

or by some other form of devotional service. After intense endeavor, we get ideas, insights, and inspirations that enable us to emerge, safe once again. Yet the next time similar negative feelings start devouring us, we often find ourselves flailing blindly; all that helped us during our previous fight seems to have disappeared from our memory.

This is where writing can play a crucial role. If we note down the ideas, insights, and inspirations that worked in the past, and the emotions we went through while deploying them, then those notes become our readymade weapons for future inner battles. Of course, when I mention things that have worked I refer not to things we have concocted through writing but to things we have taken from the scriptural tradition, the potency of which we have discovered and preserved through our writing.

This kind of writing is therapeutic in the sense that it helps us standardize, at least partially, the therapies we can use when the maladies of nondevotional emotions afflict us. All these therapies gravitate towards helping us find a practically and potently transformational way to remember Kṛṣṇa. By helping to thus transform our consciousness, this form of writing assists our inner healing.

### Explanation

"They [the students of Kṛṣṇa consciousness] must present their assimilation in their own words." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, July 1, 1969)

We now move to another external reason to write that for many is the only reason: sharing our faith. The written word has no equal as a tool for structured, reasoned, and refined communication of thoughts. The message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness encompasses the richest revelations of the highest manifestation of God and the sweetest ruminations of His greatest devotees. Writing is a precious and pivotal way to make this divine legacy available to the world. No wonder then that the *ācāryas* of our tradition toiled tirelessly to make that legacy accessible through their profound and profuse writings.

At the same time, every generation has its own ethos (way of thinking or valuing things), paradigm (way of looking at the world), and idiom (way of speaking). For a tradition to stay alive and vibrant in any generation, it needs to represent itself in ways that are sensitive, relevant, and appealing to that generation. Making that representation through the written word is the responsibility of devotee writers of each generation. Śrīla Prabhupāda points to this need in the quote that began this section.

Writing for their generation, devotee writers strive to explain the eternal message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in contextual terms and to address the prevalent preconceptions that impede their audience from understanding it. Thus they try to remove the obstacles that block their generation's vision of the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. Nothing gives such writers greater fulfillment than the knowledge that their intellectual sweat has softened the way for even one soul to return to Kṛṣṇa.

To conclude, Kṛṣṇa deserves the best of everything at all times, so He deserves the best writers in our generation too. The opportunity to take part in my generation's literary offering to Kṛṣṇa has been my life's greatest privilege. I pray, dream, and strive to cherish and relish this honor till the last day of my life. ❁

*Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami. He holds a degree in electronic and telecommunications engineering and serves full time at ISKCON Pune. To read his other articles or to receive his daily reflection on the* Bhagavad-gītā, *"Gita-daily," visit thespiritualscientist.com.*

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## LETTERS

(*continued from page 5*)

### Offering Everything to Kṛṣṇa

How can I offer everything to Kṛṣṇa? For example, when I am at work, how can I make everything an offering? Do I stop and mentally say, "Kṛṣṇa, I do this for you"? Also, what about the things in life we have difficulties with? How best can we ask for Kṛṣṇa's help with our challenges and obstacles?

David
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* As we open up to Kṛṣṇa—with our chanting and asking him to accept some service from us, and with our attempt to remember Him as the Supreme—our consciousness gets woken up, purified. This is a gradual process. We will see that we start including Kṛṣṇa, in different ways, in our life. We may begin to listen for some direction from Him in the heart, remember some instructions of His, and as you say, mentally offer the results to Him. This is progress. Instead of always thinking of ourselves, we think of Him. It takes practice and purification.

It may seem artificial in the beginning, but it will become more natural as we contact Him through *bhakti.* We try to accept all those things that may help us remember Him, like putting a picture of Him on our screen saver or on our work desk, in our car, and so on.

A strong *sādhana,* or regular spiritual practice, in the morning hours helps us carry the proper consciousness all day without separate endeavor. We are praying with our *japa* for Him to accept us and everything we do. We are begging to render some service and to connect with Him again. That is why it is so important to get that head start on the material energy with our daily spiritual program.

*Replies were written by Krishna.com Live Help volunteers. Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, Florida 32616, USA. Email: editors@krishna.com.*

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**Surat, Gujarat —** Ashram Rd., Jahangirpura, 395 005/ Tel. (261) 2765891 or 2765516/ surat@pamho.net
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◆ **Tirupati, AP —** K.T. Rd., Vinayaka Nagar, 517 507/ Tel. (877) 2231760 or 2230009/ revati.raman.jps@pamho.net (Guesthouse: guesthouse.tirupati@pamho.net)
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**Yamunanagar, Haryana —** ISKCON Hare Krishna Dham, Hare Krishna Marg, Raghunathpuri, Yamunanagar 135001/ Tel. (1732) 321001 or (mobile) 09355330775/ vishu_bakshi05@yahoo.co.in

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**Hyderabad, AP (New Naimisaranya Farm) —** P.O. Dabilpur Village, Medchal Tq., Dist. R.R., 501 401/ Tel. (40) 65520070 or 9440057263/ naimisaranya@pamho.net
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**Carriere, Mississippi (New Talavan) —** 31492 Anner Rd., 39426/ Tel. (601) 749-9460 or 799-1354/ Fax: (601) 799-2924/ talavan@hughes.net
**Gurabo, Puerto Rico (New Govardhana Hill) —** Carr. 181, Km. 16.3, Bo. Santa Rita, Gurabo (mail: HC-01, Box 8440, Gurabo, PR 00778)/ Tel. (787) 367-3530 or (787) 737-1722/ manonatha@gmail.com
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**Cardiff, Wales —** The Soul Centre, 116 Cowbridge Rd., East Canton CF11 9DX/ Tel. +44 (29) 2039 0391/ the.soul.centre@pamho.net
**Coventry, England —** Kingfield Rd., Coventry (mail: 19 Gloucester St., Coventry CV1 3BZ)/ Tel. +44 (24) 7655 2822 or 5420/ haridas.kds@pamho.net
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### AUSTRALIA

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**Melbourne —** 197 Danks St. (mail: P.O. Box 125), Albert Park, VIC 3206/ Tel. +61 (3) 9699-5122/ Fax: +61 (3) 9690-4093/ melbourne@pamho.net

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**Cessnock, NSW (New Gokula) —** Lewis Lane, off Mount View Rd., Millfield, near Cessnock (mail: P.O. Box 399, Cessnock, NSW 2325)/ Tel. +61 (2) 4998-1800/ Fax: +61 (2) 9957-1893/ iskconfarm@mac.com
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**Burleigh Heads —** Govinda's, 20 James St., Burleigh Heads, QLD 4220/ Tel. +61 (7) 5607-0782/ ajita@in.com.au
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# By the Light of the Full Moon

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT principles underpinning the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is reliance on spiritual authority. Śrīla Prabhupāda consistently pointed out that whatever he taught came from previous spiritual masters in his line and from the Vedic scriptures, especially quintessential Vaiṣṇava scriptures like the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* He insisted he was not presenting any new ideas but was passing on Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings as they had been delivered down through the centuries by His representatives.

We recently received a set of questions from a student preparing a paper for a course called World Religions in America. The first question was "Who is the founder of this religion?"

For us, the answer is not so simple. Four possible answers quickly come to mind: The founder of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is (1) Kṛṣṇa or (2) Caitanya Mahāprabhu or (3) Śrīla Prabhupāda. Or (4) there is no founder, because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the eternal religion of all souls.

To avoid confusion, we sometimes refer to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as "the modern-day Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." In a sense, Prabhupāda started a religion when he incorporated ISKCON. But to assume that he invented new religious ideas is mistaken. He created a home in America for the eternal religion.

We sometimes apply the term "the founder of the modern-day Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement" to someone else: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This too makes sense, since the flavor of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa that Śrīla Prabhupāda delivered is distinctively that revealed by Lord Caitanya. Devotees in ISKCON are Gauḍīya ("Bengali") Vaiṣṇavas or, more accurately, Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures, Lord Kṛṣṇa descended as Caitanya Mahāprabhu about five hundred years ago to show us how to follow the eternal religion of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa in the current age, Kali-yuga. Lord Caitanya taught that the chief practice of the religion of devotional service, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in Kali-yuga is the congregational chanting of the names of God (*saṅkīrtana*), especially the *mahā-mantra:* Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. So Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the founder of the *saṅkīrtana* movement, another name for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

This issue of *Back to Godhead* corresponds with the anniversary of the day on which Lord Caitanya arrived on earth. Members of ISKCON, along with millions of other Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, celebrate that day as Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā. "Gaura," meaning "golden," is a name for Caitanya because of His glowing golden complexion. And Pūrṇimā means "the full moon," as He appeared on a full-moon day.

The full moon is a fitting metaphor for the religion Lord Caitanya "founded." Whenever I drive to the temple before dawn under a full moon, I'm always amazed by how much I can see under the moonlight alone. While Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed much about Himself when He was present on earth five thousand years ago, when He came as Caitanya Mahāprabhu He shined a brilliant light that revealed intimate aspects of Himself never seen before. He didn't invent anything new; He just showed us more of the eternally existing spiritual reality.

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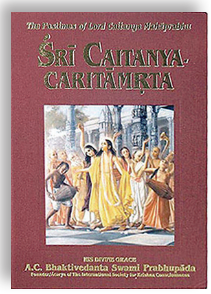
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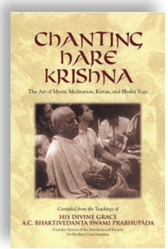
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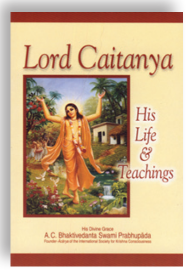
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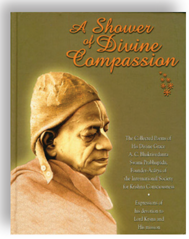
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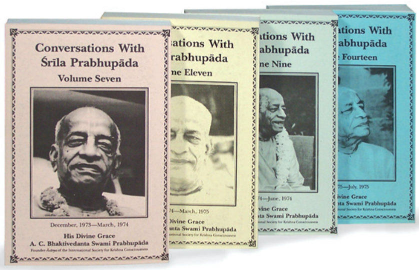
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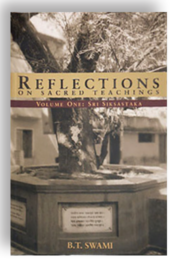
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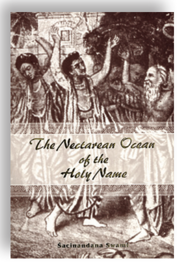
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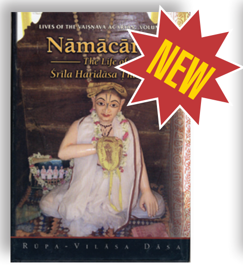
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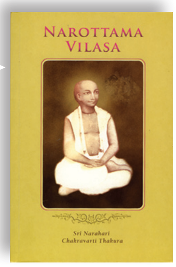
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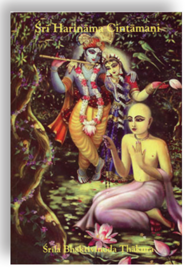
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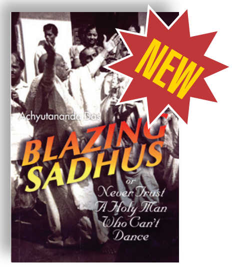
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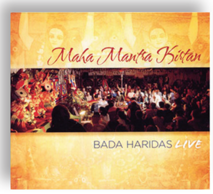
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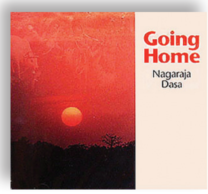
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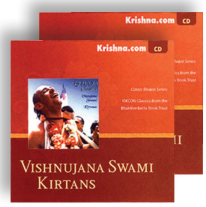
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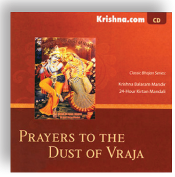
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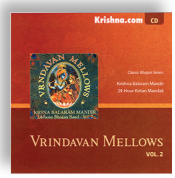
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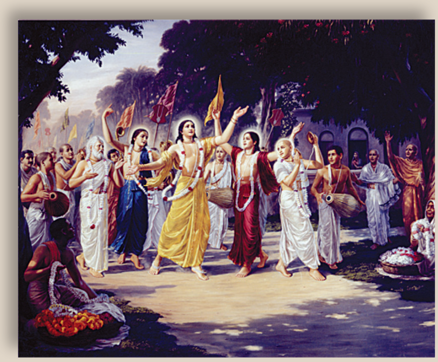

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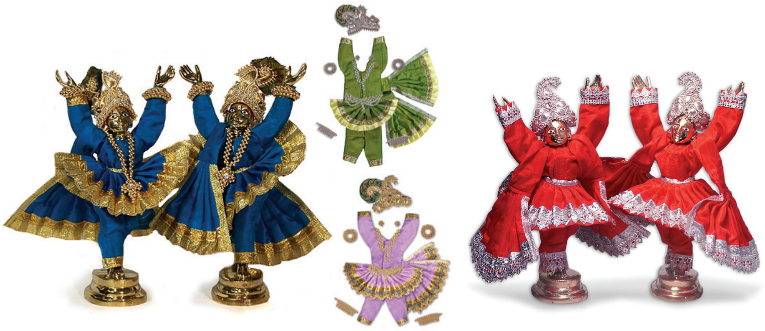

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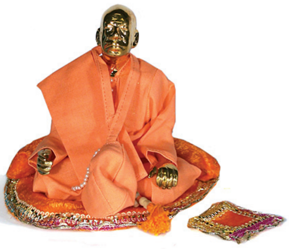

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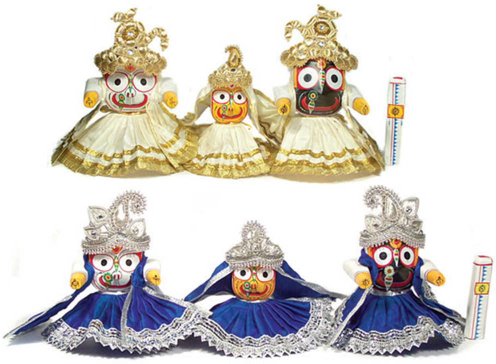

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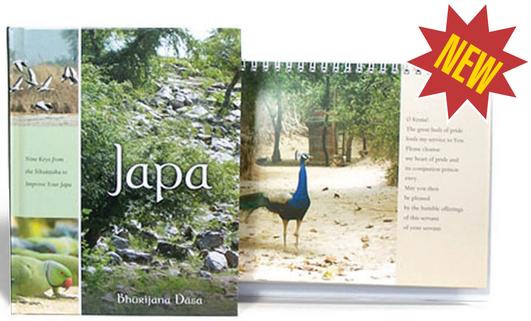

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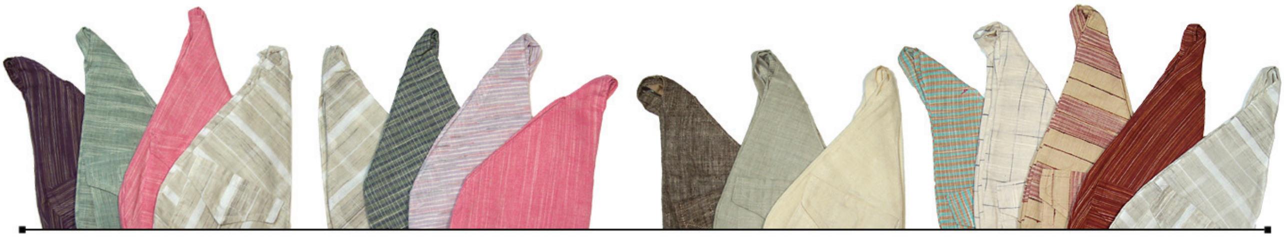

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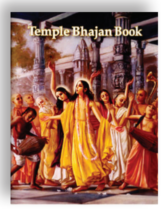

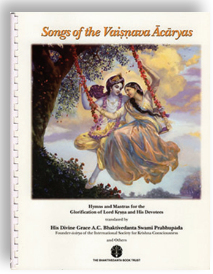

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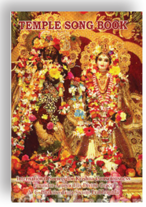

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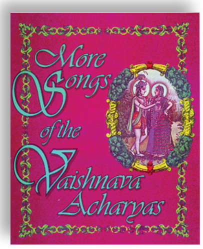

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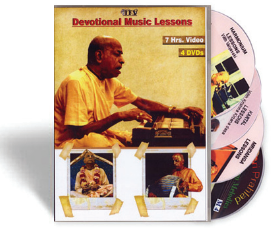

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# VEDIC THOUGHTS

The Absolute Truth is there, just as the sun is there for everyone to see. The sun does not hide, but a person can try to hide from the sun by closing his door. One must open the door in order to see the sun. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is there, God is there, and we have to come to Kṛṣṇa and take the lessons of *Bhagavad-gītā* to learn who and what God is.

His Divine Grace  
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda  
*Teachings of Lord Kapila,* Chapter 13

When someone engages in Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotional service for the satisfaction of the senses and instead acquires a taste for serving Kṛṣṇa, he gives up his material desires and willingly offers himself as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu  
*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 22.41

Since the primeval Personality of Godhead is easily attained by offering Him such things as leaves, flowers, fruits, and water, which are all found without difficulty, why does one need to endeavor for liberation separately?

*Nṛsiṁha Purāṇa*  
(Quoted in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*  
10.14.4, Purport)

It is firmly declared that the steady adherence of transcendentalists to their respective spiritual positions constitutes real piety and that sin occurs when a transcendentalist neglects his prescribed duty. One who adopts this standard of piety and sin, sincerely desiring to give up all past association with sense gratification, is able to subdue materialistic activities, which are by nature impure.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.26

My dear Vaiṣṇava, seeing a person like you is the perfection of one's eyesight, touching your lotus feet is the perfection of the sense of touch, and glorifying your good qualities is the tongue's real activity, for in the material world it is very difficult to find a pure devotee of the Lord.

*Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* 13.2

The Lord is the eye of the eye and the ear of the ear.

*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.18

Just as the fire of digestion, from the moment food is eaten, begins digesting it but completes the process after nine or twelve hours, so from the beginning of devotional practice, *bhakti* begins to destroy material life in the form of lamentation and illusion but completes the process of destruction only after some time. Thus even at the stage of practice, when lamentation and illusion have not been destroyed, one should not consider the devotee to be in *saṁsāra,* the cycle of birth and death.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura  
Commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.33

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